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BERNARD BARTON AND HIS FRIENDS

BRIEF

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E. V. LUCAS

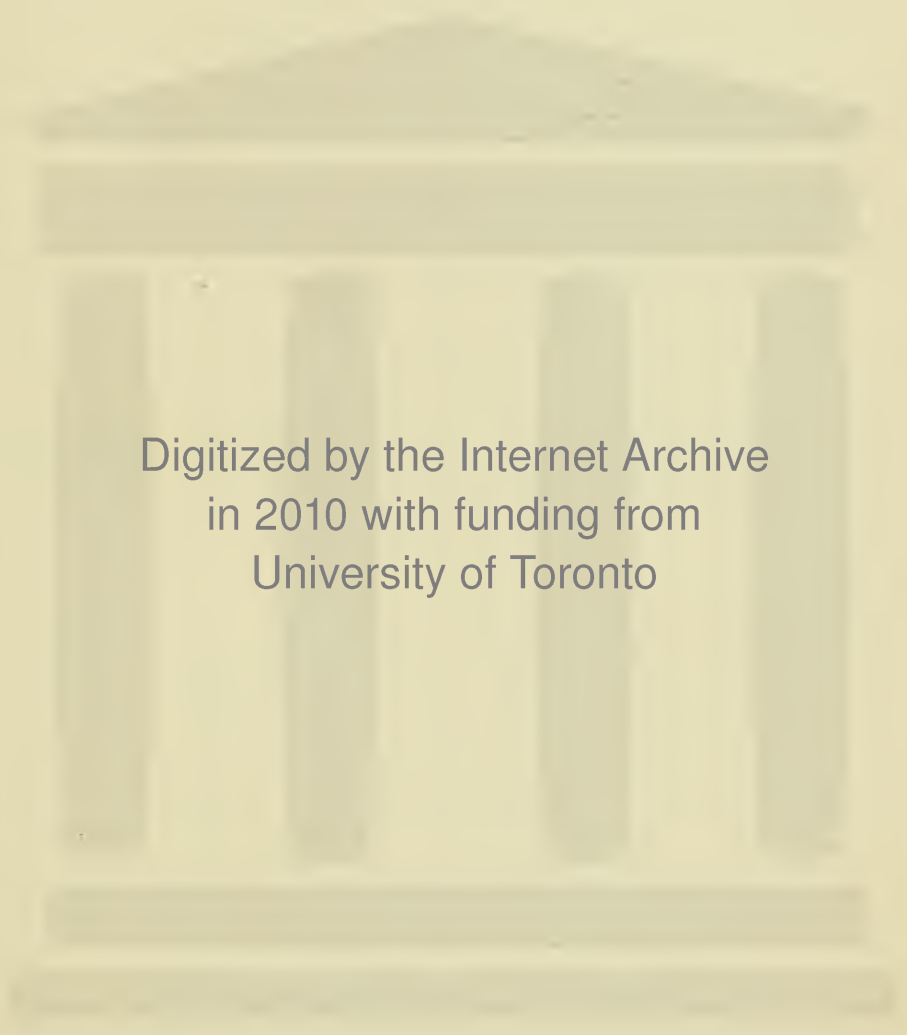
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M. G. Lyons

for

Mr Fitz Gerald





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BERNARD BARTON AND HIS FRIENDS.



BERNARD BARTON.

BERNARD BARTON AND HIS
FRIENDS: A RECORD OF
QUIET LIVES. BY EDWARD
VERRALL LUCAS.

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LONDON, 1893.



Brief

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TO

MRS. EDWARD FITZGERALD

IN GRATEFUL ACKNOWLEDG-
MENT OF HER UNTIRING
HELPLESSNESS AND ENCOU-
RAGING INTEREST DURING
ITS PROGRESS, THIS RECORD
OF THE LIFE AND FRIEND-
SHIPS OF HER FATHER IS
RESPECTFULLY AND AFFEC-
TIONATELY DEDICATED.



PREFATORY NOTE.

IN 1849, the year of Bernard Barton's death, there was published a selection of his letters and poems, edited by his daughter, together with a brief memoir of the poet by his friend the late Edward FitzGerald. This memoir, for delicacy of style, justice of appreciation, and rightness of proportion, is a model of what such memoirs should be; and to tamper with it is almost sacrilege. But the volume of which it is a part being out of print and only rarely obtainable, and the life of Bernard Barton, by reason of its wise cheerfulness, simplicity, and wholesome sweetness, being in this hurried, incomplete day of ours so fraught with charm and instruction, I gladly accepted the invitation to attempt to recover and reproduce some of its serenity. With the consent of Mr. FitzGerald's literary executor, Mr. Aldis Wright, I have however on every possible occasion used the words of the memoir rather than my own, so that the present book is practically a reprint of the volume of 1849, with much new matter added.

The readers will find, I hope not to their confusion, that in the pages that follow little attempt has been made at a consecutive narrative. I regret that it was impracticable to

PREFATORY NOTE.

present the life of Bernard Barton year by year, achievement after achievement ; but his career was so uneventful, and so devoid of any kind of progression, that he may be said truthfully to have been as firmly established in his convictions and philosophy of living at the age of thirty as of sixty. Even his latest poems show no advance upon his earliest. Moreover he did not move with the times, and he took no part in public affairs ; from the death of his wife in 1808, until his own death in 1849, he lived through one long, level day. At the risk therefore of sinning against art, I have occasionally leaped from the twenties to the forties, and from the thirties back to the tens, in such a way as would cause bewilderment were the dates of any importance.

I have to express my thanks principally to Mrs. Edward FitzGerald, and also to Miss Churchyard, Mr. Samuel Alexander, and others, for the assistance they have given me in my researches ; and to Mr. Aldis Wright and Messrs. Macmillan and Co., for kindly allowing me to make extracts from the *Letters and Literary Remains of Edward FitzGerald*.

EDWARD VERRALL LUCAS.

LONDON, *December, 1893.*

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CHAPTER I.

ANCESTRY AND YOUTH.

The pride that springs from high descent
May be no pride of mine ;
My lowlier views are well content
To claim a humble line :
Fancy shall wing no daring flight,
And rear no lofty dome ;
Ive-Gill's small hamlet her delight,
Ive-Gill her modest home.

Ive-Gill.

THE home of the Bartons was in Cumberland. John Barton, Bernard's great-grandfather, dwelt at Ive-Gill, a little hamlet near Carlisle, and was, in his great-grandson's words, "one of those truly patriarchal personages, a Cumbrian statesman, living on his own little estate, and drawing from it all things needful for himself and his family." The estate was little indeed, for its annual value was estimated at only £2 15s. ; and yet so wisely was it administered, that John Barton, a zealous Churchman, was the chief means, as his

descendant is glad to record, of building the little chapel in the dale. Bernard continues: "I doubt not he was a fine, simple-hearted, noble-minded yeoman, in his day, and I am very proud of him. Why did his son, my grandfather, after whom I was named, ever leave that pleasant dale, and go and set up a manufactory in Carlisle, inventing a piece of machinery for which he had a medal from the Royal Society? Methinks he had better have abode in the old grey-stone, slate-covered homestead on the banks of that pretty brooklet, the Ive. But I bear his name, so I will not quarrel with his memory."

This Bernard Barton, the grandfather of the poet, died at Carlisle in 1773, aged forty-five, and was followed to the grave thirteen years later by his wife, five infant sons being buried with them. Referring to these children half-a-century afterwards, the poet writes: "Only think of those five uncles of mine, or uncle-ets rather, for they grew not up to mature unclehood! Had they all lived, wedded, and had families, what a Bartonian host we should or might have been." One son however did survive, John Barton, Bernard's father, who inherited the manufactory but not the business capabilities of a manufacturer. "I always," he wrote, "perused a Locke, an Addison, or a Pope, with delight, and ever sat down to my ledger with a sort of disgust."¹ When quite a young man he determined to quit business

¹ See a letter from his son on page 69.

altogether, but never carried out the resolve, although he made many changes both in occupation and the scene of its transaction.

At an early age he married Maria Done, a Quaker lady, who came of a Cheshire family; and at the same time himself embraced the Quaker faith. The following letter concerning his courtship illustrates so clearly the frankness, independence, and thorough worthiness of the man, and is at the same time so admirable a composition, that the reader is asked to pardon its insertion. It should be stated that the letter was inscribed to John Bell, of Carlisle, a minister of the Society of Friends.

CARLISLE, 27th April, 1775.

I am going, my much esteemed Friend, to take the liberty of addressing you upon, and to solicit your kind, your Christian interposition and assistance, in an affair which most deeply and tenderly affects me. In doing this, I should, perhaps, by some, be thought to assume a liberty which the shortness of our acquaintance would hardly justify; and the mode of application I have made choice of, 'tis very probable might be censured by many as singular and extraordinary. But the assurance I already have of the goodness of your heart is sufficient to encourage me to hope that, when you reflect on the importance of the subject I am going to address you upon (for to me it is truly important), you will consider it as a sufficient apology for the freedom which I have ventured to take, and likewise for the *manner* in which I have taken it.

It is entirely needless, I presume, to inform you of my prepossessions in favour of Miss Done, as I have sufficient reason to believe that this is an attachment which you are by no means ignorant of. It is an attachment which I

have long avowed, which I have ever warmly cherished and cultivated, and which has been attended with many pleasing, many happy consequences. But, alas ! *all* its consequences have not been pleasing ! Some it has produced which have been far, very far, from contributing to that happiness which I had flattered myself such an attachment could not fail to promote. By endeavouring to attain the esteem and affection of Maria (and to obtain these I always have done, and ever shall do, everything in my power) I have unfortunately incurred the united opposition of almost all her relations—a circumstance which has given me much pain, and which is rendered a thousand times more afflicting by this most unpleasing consideration, that she likewise has perhaps experienced the unmerited slights of those who were formerly zealous to show every expression of cordial affection, and whose approbation and regard are still essential to her happiness. It is this circumstance which has cast a melancholy gloom over a connexion that in other respects has equally contributed to my honour and satisfaction ; and in order to remove this it is that I ardently desire, and earnestly request, that you would exert your friendly endeavours to put an end to this opposition, and to restore us, if possible, to the general esteem and friendship of one another.

The particular part you act in that Society to which all my opponents belong, your years, your character, your intimacy with the family—and in particular your well known esteem for Maria—all these point you out as the man who of all others is best qualified for the important task I wish you to engage in. And surely that task is far from being an unworthy one. There can be no character which as men, or more especially as Christians, we ought to be more ambitious of sustaining than that of a *Peacemaker*. Peace merely for its own sake, and the sake of Maria, is all I wish for.

It is very possible, indeed, that even this character, amiable as it generally is, may sometimes be an unworthy

one ; and cases may be supposed both in public and private life, in the affairs of families as well as those of nations, where *dishonourable treaties* may be made. But in the present instance, I would gladly hope, this is not the case. If I thought it was—if I had reason to expect that this connexion would, in any instance, deprive Maria of anything which was necessary to her happiness ; or contribute in any measure to lessen her in the estimation of any one impartial individual whose good opinion was worth caring for, if I thought such a connexion would be dishonourable to herself, or to her family, much and sincerely as I wish for it—I seriously and solemnly declare I would not persist in my suit another hour.

From what motives has arisen the opposition of her relations I am at a loss to understand. Extremely sorry should I be to suppose that it rested on any reasonable or solid foundation ; and I am still persuaded it would be equally unjust to imagine it is grounded on a selfish or illiberal one. Would they but exercise that candour upon this occasion which is so natural to them upon others, I trust a little examination would make it appear that their opposition only proceeded from groundless prejudice or gross misinformation. And were they but once, through your friendly interposition, convinced of this, I hope their present shyness and reserve would be changed into a very different and much more agreeable sort of conduct. But why am I presuming to beg your assistance in removing the objections of others, when, for anything I know to the contrary, these very objections are equally *your own*, and you yourself a party to that opposition which I am so earnestly soliciting you to endeavour to put an end to ? To confess the truth, I am not without my fears that this has hitherto in some measure been really the case. But such is my opinion of your candour and benevolence, that I persuade myself if you have, indeed, any considerable objections to the connexion in question, you will tell me of them with frankness and ingenuity, and give me a fair

opportunity of pleading my own cause in a case wherein I am so much interested ; and if upon an impartial examination you should still think it your duty to oppose me, I have then no right to expect either encouragement or assistance from you.

In the meanwhile, I think I may be allowed to say, without the imputation of vanity, that my conduct is as irreproachable, and my circumstances by no means worse than those of another who was so far from being objected to by my opposers, that they did everything in their power to forward and befriend him. One circumstance there was, indeed, in which he certainly had the advantage of me—I mean his being of the same religious profession with the amiable woman he wished to be connected with. But if this has been a principal objection, it need not be one any longer. Convinced as I am, and as I have publicly acknowledged myself to be, of the superiority of the tenets and principles of your Society over those of the Church in which I have been educated, I can have no objection to a change of *profession, if such a change shall be found practicable*—I say, *if such a change shall be found practicable*—for I have often feared, and I have sometimes been told, that the Society would not be willing to acknowledge me as a member. They may, perhaps, consider such a change, not as proceeding from real conviction, but as matter of interest or convenience, and think themselves sufficiently justified in supposing that some *other* love than that of Truth merely has induced me to take so unusual a step. Should these be their sentiments, and should these sentiments lead them to reject me, all my hopes of a reconciliation with Maria's relations may prove groundless, and I may still experience those slights and that opposition from which I have already suffered so much.

But if *you* are convinced of the contrary, I make no doubt you will have it in your power entirely to remove the scruples of others. Permit me, then, to give you this assurance that, though I should probably never have thought of

becoming a member of your Society had my attachment to Maria never existed, yet still, that no attachment, however endearing, should induce me to espouse any principles of the truth of which I was not fully convinced, or to give an *outward and verbal* preference to anything unwarranted by *the conviction of my understanding and the feelings of my heart*.

But I fear you will begin to think an apology necessary for detaining you so long. I have only one more request to make, and I will detain you no longer. Should this application not meet with its wished-for success—should you, instead of favouring me with your assistance, think it proper to act a contrary part, I hope you will at least be content to let this letter pass by without further notice : so that, if it cannot be subservient to any useful purpose, I may still have the satisfaction of knowing that my futile endeavours are buried in oblivion. Farewell, and believe me I ever am, with much respect, your very sincere friend,

JOHN BARTON.¹

¹ This letter was given to Bernard Barton by an unknown friend, Deborah Robinson, of Cockermouth, nearly fifty years after it was penned. He held it almost as a sacred thing, and would proudly allude to himself as the son of the man who wrote it. In the letter which accompanied the gift, the reference to Maria Done's poetical talent is noteworthy. Deborah Robinson wrote as follows :

COCKERMOUTH, 5th 3rd, 1824.

RESPECTED FRIEND, BERNARD BARTON,—

The precious relic which accompanies these few lines from an unknown friend will, I trust, be a sufficient apology for the liberty taken in addressing thee. A little explanation on my part may be satisfactory respecting the letter which I have had in my possession, I believe, over forty years, and now with real heartfelt pleasure give up to thee.

The letter was addressed to John Bell, a *minister* in our Society, then resident in Carlisle, and (as thou wilt perceive) an intimate in thy mother's family. I was not much acquainted with either John Bell or his wife; an intimate friend of the latter gave me the letter, I believe for no other reason than my admiring the manly sentiments it contained, and also my being an admirer of Maria Done's (afterward thy mother) poetical effusions. I am quite ignorant what part John Bell acted in the affair after the receipt of the letter; if I ever was told, length of time has erased it from my memory. Although I have often occasionally read the letter to my

John Barton was fortunate in his champion, and his marriage with Maria Done soon took place. They had several children, but all died young save Maria (afterwards Maria Hack, the author of many instructive books for children), Eliza, and Bernard.

Bernard Barton was born on January 31st, 1784. At the time of his birth his father was dwelling in London, where he found society and interests more to his liking than those offered by Carlisle. Bernard's mother died when he was only a few days old, "but," he wrote subsequently, "my father married again in my infancy so wisely and happily, that I knew not but his second wife was my own mother, till I learned it years after at a boarding school."

John Barton's second wife, who bore him one son, Bernard's half-brother John, was Elizabeth Horne, a Quaker, the daughter of Thomas Horne, of Bankside and Tottenham.

intimate friends, I ever felt a scrupulous delicacy in having it copied, though not enjoined to it, nor has there ever been a copy taken, to my knowledge, since it was in my possession. When thy first volume of poems was sent me by a friend, the perusal of which afforded me much gratification, I thought if ever it was in my power to have this letter of thy father's properly conveyed to thee, I should like to do so, and it is with much satisfaction I can now do it thro' the medium of our mutual friend, Mary Sutton. *Thou wilt value it*, and no doubt the perusal may awaken the sentiments of filial affection in thy breast, and probably excite such tender emotions as no other person can feel from its perusal.

I am glad it is preserved so entire, and it sometimes appears wonderful to me that it has been preserved in my hands such a very long time, seemingly for no other substantial reason but to be sent to thee.

Farewell—and believe me, with sentiments of cordial esteem,

Thy sincere, though unknown Friend,

DEBORAH ROBINSON.

P.S.—The friend from whom I had this letter has some time been deceased, therefore no further information can be had on that subject.

Of this excellent man the poet wrote fifty years later :

My most delightful recollections of boyhood are connected with the fine old country-house in a green lane diverging from the high road which runs through Tottenham. I would give seven years of life as it now is, for a week of that which I then led. It was a large old house, with an iron palisade and a pair of iron gates in front, and a huge stone eagle on each pier. Leading up to the steps by which you went up to the hall door, was a wide gravel walk, bordered in summer time by huge tubs, in which were orange and lemon trees, and in the centre of the grass-plot stood a tub yet huger, holding an enormous aloe. The hall itself, to my fancy then lofty and wide as a cathedral would seem now, was a famous place for battle-dore and shuttlecock ; and behind was a garden, equal to that of old Alcinous himself. My favourite walk was one of turf by a long straight pond, bordered with lime-trees. But the whole demesne was the fairy ground of my childhood ; and its presiding genius was grandpapa. He must have been a very handsome man in his youth, for I remember him at nearly eighty, a very fine-looking one, even in the decay of mind and body. In the morning a velvet cap ; by dinner, a flaxen wig ; his features always expressive of benignity and placid cheerfulness. When he walked out into the garden, his cocked hat and amber-headed cane completed his costume. To the recollection of this delightful personage, I am, I think, indebted for many soothing and pleasing associations with old age.

In a letter to another friend the poet records a further reminiscence of these happy Tottenham days. Of his grandfather's house he says :

But every earthly elysium has its set-off ; and this was not exempt. A good citizen of the name of Townsend, a particular friend of the venerable pair, used to come down

there and bring his gout with him ; and my poor grandam's fright lest I should go near his too susceptible foot, used to keep her and me in a worry. Well nigh half-a-century has elapsed since those days, but her reiterated exclamation, ' Child ! do take care and not run against friend Townsend's foot,' is yet distinctly in my mind's ear. T. was a patient, quiet old sufferer too, and if I did touch the forbidden stool in an unlucky moment, he was the first to notify that no harm was done.

John Barton took some part in public affairs in London, for, in 1787, we find his name on the first committee appointed to promote the abolition of the slave trade, "in honourable companionship with that of Thomas Clarkson ;" but his temperament would not permit him to settle down, and he moved soon afterwards to Hertford, where he had bought a partnership in a malting business. Here he died, not yet forty, in Bernard's seventh year. His widow, with her own son and three stepchildren, returned to her paternal home at Tottenham, and Bernard was sent to a Quaker school at Ipswich. There he stayed until his fourteenth year, when he was apprenticed to Samuel Jesup, a Quaker, at Halstead, in Essex. In 1806, at the expiration of his indentures, he moved to Woodbridge, in Suffolk, and in 1807 married Lucy Jesup, the niece of his late master, and set up in business, in partnership with her brother, as a corn and coal merchant. A year later his wife died in giving birth to a daughter. The blow was almost too severe, and Bernard Barton felt compelled to leave a town so full of associations of his lost happiness.

Little record of Lucy Barton has come down to us, but only a lovely and lovable character could have inspired these touching verses :

O thou from earth for ever fled !
Whose reliques lie among the dead,
With daisied verdure overspread,
My Lucy !

For many a weary day gone by,
How many a solitary sigh
I've heaved for thee, no longer nigh,
My Lucy !

And if to grieve I cease awhile,
I look for that enchanting smile
Which all my cares could once beguile,
My Lucy !

But ah ! in vain—the blameless art
Which used to soothe my troubled heart
Is lost with thee, my better part,
My Lucy !

Thy converse, innocently free,
That made the fiends of fancy flee,
Ah, then I felt the want of thee,
My Lucy !

Nor is it for myself alone
That I thy early death bemoan ;
Our infant now is *all my own*,
My Lucy !

Could'st thou a guardian angel prove
To the dear offspring of our love,
Until it reach the realms above,
My Lucy !

Could thy angelic spirit stray,
Unseen companion of my way,
As onward drags the weary day,
My Lucy !

And when the midnight hour shall close
 Mine eyes in short, unsound repose,
 Could'st thou but whisper off my woes,
My Lucy!

Then though thy loss I must deplore,
 Till next we meet to part no more,
 I'd wait the grasp that from me tore
My Lucy!

For, be my life but spent like thine,
 With joy shall I that life resign,
 And fly to thee, for ever mine,
My Lucy!

And here, in one of the most beautiful of the many poems which Bernard Barton addressed to his daughter, is another testimony to the sweet virtues of her mother:

My child, this is thy natal day,
 And might a father's prayer
 For thee inspire his votive lay,
 What blessing should'st thou share?

Shall wit, or wealth, or beauty move
 Thy sire to bend his knee?
 I hold thee far too dear, my love,
 To crave these things for thee.

If wish of mine might prove of worth,
 Be this thy portion given,—
 Thy mother's blameless life on earth,
 Thy mother's lot in heaven.

On leaving Woodbridge, the young widower abandoned business and accepted a situation at Liverpool as private tutor in the family of Mr. Waterhouse, a merchant. Always tenderly fond of children, he soon lost some of the poignancy of his grief in the companionship

of his pupils, and he was, moreover, enabled to turn his mind to those congenial studies which commerce had rendered impossible. As a matter of fact, Mr. Barton was well rid of buying and selling; for like so many men with the artistic temperament, he was completely lost in trade, being no more fitted to make a bargain than to command a man-of-war. To the end of his days he could never balance his own accounts, however methodically kept were those of his employers. At Liverpool he was fortunate in winning the friendship of William Roscoe, who offered advice on his poetry, lent him books, and helped to correct his taste; a kindness acknowledged by the poet some years after in the stanzas beginning:

When first, like a child building houses with cards,
I mimick'd the labours of loftier bards;
Though the fabrics I built felt each breath that came near,
Thy smiles taught me hope, and thy praise banish'd fear.

Thou didst not reprove with an Aristarch's pride;
Or unfeelingly chill, or uncandidly chide;
It was not in thy nature with scorn to regard
The fresh-breathing hopes of an untutor'd bard.

After a stay of only a year in Liverpool, Mr. Barton returned to Woodbridge, and accepted the post of clerk in the bank of Dykes and Samuel Alexander, in whose service he remained until his death, forty years later. It is with those forty years that we are concerned.

And here, before the record begins of Bernard Barton's quiet pilgrimage, it would be well perhaps to warn the reader that in the pages

that follow he need look for none of those extremes or eccentricities that so often make biographies hardly less piquant than romance. He will find himself in the presence of a plain man, unselfish and undistinguished, whose every thought was kindly, whose every word was gentle, whose leisurely walk through life lay along sheltered lanes and over level meads; a man, none the less, of fine judgment, broad sympathies, generous toleration, and rich humour—attributes which have been missed by many who have risen to far greater eminence.

But the reader if he be wise will find ample compensation for the absence of spiced anecdote and all the brilliancies which have come to be associated with the literary career, in the insight he will gain into a contented mind. Had he been possessed of more leisure and means, or had he at an early age come into contact with some powerful and luminous intellect, Bernard Barton might have done great work. But such speculation is idle; moreover no companionship however stimulating could have strengthened the Quaker Poet's native sanity. Indeed, were not arrogance foreign to his nature, he might have looked with calm superiority upon many of his wealthier and more talented fellows, for his was the rare secret of self-containment and content: acceptance of and adherence to the facts of life were his also.

By a happy chance, at the time this chapter was under revision, there appeared Mr.

C. E. Norton's *Letters of James Russell Lowell*¹ In that most interesting book is printed an estimate of the American critic by Mr. Leslie Stephen, some of whose words are so truly applicable to Bernard Barton that they are reproduced here. Mr. Stephen says that his strongest impression of his friend is one of "his unvarying sweetness and simplicity." He continues: "I have seen him in great sorrow and in the most unreserved domestic intimacy. The dominant impression was always the same: of unmixed kindness and thorough wholesomeness of nature. There did not seem to be a drop of bitterness in his composition. There was plenty of virtuous indignation on occasion, but he could not help being tolerant even towards antagonists. He seemed to be always full of cordial goodwill. . . ." Unless this book has been sadly mis-handled, the reader will find that such a man was Bernard Barton.

"My temperament," he writes to one of his correspondents, "is, as far as man can judge of himself, eminently social. I am wont to live out of myself, and to cling to anything or anybody lovable within my reach"—a sentiment repeated and amplified in a letter to another friend, written when the poet was fifty-five:

The longer I live the more expedient I find it to endeavour more and more to extend my sympathies and affections. The natural tendency of advancing years is to narrow and contract these feelings. I do not mean that I

¹ Published by Messrs. Macmillan and Co.

wish to form a new and sworn friendship every day—to increase my circle of intimates ; these are very different affairs. But I find it conduces to my mental health and happiness to find out all I can which is amiable and loveable in all I come in contact with, and to make the most of it. It may fall very short of what I was once wont to dream of ; it may not supply the place of what I have known, felt, and tasted ; but it is better than nothing—it serves to keep the feelings and affections in exercise—it keeps the heart alive in its humanity ; and, till we shall be all spiritual, this is alike our duty and our interest.

And again, in one of the many poems addressed to his daughter occurs this beautiful confession :

I have no foes—to set them
As beacons in thy sight ;
But if I had—‘ *Forget them !* ’
Is all that I would write.¹

The history of a broad mind cannot but be instructive, however feebly the historian may have done his work. Of Bernard Barton’s wide tolerance there cannot be two opinions : although a Quaker, he numbered among his

1 The same spirit of Christian charity informs these lines, which were written by Bernard Barton in his daughter’s prayer book :

My creed requires no form of prayer ;
Yet would I not condemn
Those who adopt with pious care
Their use as aids to them.

One God hath fashion’d them and me ;
One Spirit is our guide ;
For each, alike, upon the tree
One common Saviour died !

Each the same trumpet-call shall wake,
To face the judgment seat ;
God give us grace, for Jesus’ sake,
In the same heaven to meet.

friends a Barrack-master and a Reader of Plays, and to the curate of his town he could address this sonnet :

Dear friend, and Christian brother ; if thy creed
May not on every point agree with mine ;
Yet may we worship at one common shrine,
While both alike we feel our urgent need
Of the same Saviour ; as a broken reed
Count all—except His righteousness Divine ;
And equal honour reverently assign
Unto that Spirit, who for both must plead !

Since in these grand essentials we agree,
Oh, what are modes of worship, forms of prayer,
Or outward sacraments ? I would not dare
To doubt that such are helpful unto thee ;
Nor wilt thou fail in charity for me,
Seeking *within* to *know* and *feel* them *there* !

“ Since in these grand essentials we agree.”
There we have it. Bernard Barton was one
of the few who have discovered the “ grand
essentials ” and have clung to them.

CHAPTER II.

WOODBIDGE.

My own beloved, adopted town !
Even this glimpse of thee,
Whereon I've seen the sun go down
So oft—suffices me.

For more than forty chequer'd years
Hast thou not been my home ?
Till all that most this life endears
Forbids a wish to roam.

I came to thee a stranger youth,
Unknowing and unknown ;
And Friendship's solace, and Love's truth,
In thee have been mine own.

Loved for the living and the dead,
No other home I crave ;
Here would I live till life be fled,
Here find a nameless grave.

On a Vignette of Woodbridge from the Warren Hill.

NOT until the latter half of his life had Bernard Barton a roof to call his own, although no man could have a finer sense of the sanctities of the home, nor better dispense

the hospitalities of the hearth. During his first years in the bank he made the experiment of more than one lodging, where he was forced to endure much discomfort on account of contracted space. Many indeed must have been the poems composed by him under the worst of difficulties. He at length found a lodging as nearly like a home as any lodging could be, in the house of Anne Knight and her sisters. Anne Knight was a clever and very charming Quaker lady, a widow, who on the death of her husband had returned to Woodbridge to help her sisters in the management of a school where the minds of little Quaker children were instructed in the elements of learning and their thoughts led to white and worthy things.

"So A. K. keeps a school," wrote Charles Lamb, to whom Bernard Barton had introduced her; "she teaches nothing wrong, I'll answer for't. I have a Dutch print of a schoolmistress; little old-fashioned Fleminglings, with only one face among them. She is a princess of a schoolmistress, wielding a rod for form more than use; the scene, an old monastic chapel, with a Madonna over her head, looking just as serious, as thoughtful, as pure, as gentle as herself. 'Tis a type of thy friend."

The school must have been a pleasant one, for there are still old pupils who love to tell of delightful evenings when Mr. Barton would come in with a merry greeting and the narrative of some portentous Woodbridge event for the ears of the children; or, glowing from its achievement, would read a new poem to

Anne Knight, his critic, counsellor, and friend in one. The warm regard which he entertained for the three sisters finds some expression in these stanzas, written by him to accompany the gift of one of his early volumes :

Whether these pages win for me,
In other eyes, a Poet's name,
Allow them in your own to be
A pledge of Friendship's dearer claim.

The proudest fame the World can give
Scarce pays the Bard whose wishes roam :
The fame for which 'tis sweet to live,
Must come from eyes, lips, hearts—at home !

Meanwhile, his little daughter Lucy, who from her infancy had been in the charge of her grandparents, was steadily growing up. When old enough she was sent to boarding-school, dividing the holidays very happily between various relatives : her favourite visiting-place perhaps being the home of her aunt Maria Hack. As soon as was convenient after she became of a companionable and helpful age, father and daughter took up their quarters in what was perhaps the tiniest house ever inhabited by a poet. Many were the happy hours spent there ; but Bernard Barton's true environment was the bank house, whither they moved some years after, and where they lived until his death. There, in sufficiently spacious rooms of his own, he was able at last to express himself ; and the walls growing every day more wealthy in books and pictures, soon reflected,

as all walls should, the individuality of their owner. Henceforward, Bernard Barton was to roam no more.

In the forty and four years that have passed by since the Quaker Poet was laid to rest in the little burying-ground of the Woodbridge meeting-house, the old town has seen few changes. The houses have crept farther into the country on the north side, and the new railway has made it easier for the townsfolk to gain that immediate knowledge of public affairs without which no modern civilized man deems himself able to be happy ; but the Deben tide runs in and out as of old, the waterfowl utter their plaints with as melancholy a voice, and the dun sails of the barges offer as gracious a rest to the eye as they did when the century was still young. The graves on Warren Hill lie thicklier, it is true, than when the poet sang of "The Solitary Tomb," and the foliage of the surrounding trees now hides all but bright glimpses of the river. Moreover, a notice-board warns the wayfarer that it is criminal to leave the footpath that crosses the "Valley of Fern."

Could the poet return again, he would find little change in the town's diurnal course and ways of thinking. Just as an isolated field of corn sometimes escapes all damage during the thunderstorms of July, so has Woodbridge avoided harm from the torrents of *osophies* and *isms* which have beaten upon less fortunate districts of the country. The curfew is still rung

at eight of an evening. At the Seckford Hospital, another race of aged pensioners identical in dress and feebleness with the aged pensioners of Bernard Barton's day, sit on fine mornings with their faces turned to the sun, secure in haven at last, watching as did their predecessors the ascending smoke of tobacco, their most constant temporal friend. The bank is unchanged too. Bernard Barton's corner is as it was ; and although put now to other uses, the room in which he died, the sitting-room hung with pictures wherein he received his guests, and the little study where many of his poems and most of his letters were written, are almost as he left them. The creeper has spread farther over the wall—that is all.

These forty and four years have however laid low all but a handful of the poet's friends and acquaintances. But although Edward Fitzgerald is their distinguished townsman whom the Woodbridge people most delight to honour, Bernard Barton's name is still revered. Stories are gladly told of his joviality, his kindly humour, his generosity and thoughtfulness for little things. There are still in Woodbridge aged men and women who retain a clear impression of his cheery presence, and recall with no small pleasure the merry twinkle in his brown eyes as he dropped some sly jest or daring compliment. And there are many others with fewer years to their account who recollect that as children they were often indebted to Mr. Barton for stray pence, sweet-

meats and buns, and encouraging pats on their curly heads. The diminutive house in Cumberland Street where Bernard Barton lived in his middle Woodbridge days, is still known as Poet's Cottage; and tradition still has it that when at the dinner hour he left the Bank and walked home, his punctuality was so unfailing that the housewives on the route were used to put the potatoes into water as he passed their doors.

Bernard Barton and Woodbridge were inseparably associated. It probably would be hard to find another instance of a man of such liberal views and such great literary ambition who was content to remain for the whole of his life in so dull an environment as that offered by an East Anglian market-town. As we shall see, Bernard Barton was occasionally troubled by desires to exchange Woodbridge for London, but they soon passed, leaving him even better satisfied to spend and end his days in retirement. And in his later life, at any rate, retirement meant little less than actual confinement: a circumstance noticed by the author of a religious work entitled *The Summer and Winter of the Soul*, which has for frontispiece a picture of Bernard Barton's grave. With the Quaker Poet, says this writer, "life appears to have gently and equably ebbed away; and standing beneath his memorial tree, one is struck by reflecting within what brief circumference his house of business, home, and final resting-place were bounded. . . . A walk of some ten minutes would embrace them all."

Much as he loved Woodbridge and Woodbridge folk, and notable as he was among the men of the town, Mr. Barton held no public offices. Occasionally his pen was employed in the service of local charity, and he wrote more than a few sets of memorial verses upon well-known persons of the neighbourhood; but in municipal affairs he took no part. "Politics of any sort, or of all sorts," he once wrote to a correspondent, "are not to my taste; but those connected with electioneering tactics are the most loathsome." When, however, it may be noted, he was persuaded to take sides on behalf of some personal friend, he was found usually among the Liberals, although his love of Suffolk farms and Suffolk farmers led him to stand against the repeal of the Corn Laws. He called himself "a Whig of the old school." His refusal to touch public matters did his popularity no harm: all classes of Woodbridge society held him in affection, and his advice and company were eagerly sought after. In the words of the Memoir of the poet written by Mr. Edward FitzGerald—

His literary talents, social amiability, and blameless character, made him respected, liked, and courted among his neighbours. Few, high or low, but were glad to see him at his customary place in the bank, from which he smiled a kindly greeting, or came down with friendly, open hand, and some frank words of family inquiry—perhaps with the offer of a pinch from his never-failing snuff-box—or with the withdrawal of the visitor, if more intimate, to see some letter or copy of verses, just received or just composed, or some picture just purchased. Few, high or low, but were

glad to have him at their tables ; where he was equally pleasant and equally pleased, whether with the fine folks at the Hall, or with the homely company at the Farm ; carrying every where indifferently the same good feeling, good spirits, and good manners ; and by a happy frankness of nature, that did not too precisely measure its utterance on such occasions, checkering the conventional gentility of the drawing-room with some humours of humbler life, which in turn he refined with a little sprinkling of literature.

At a later point in the Memoir Mr. Fitzgerald says :

One of his favourite prose books was Boswell's 'Johnson' ; of which he knew all the good things by heart, an inexhaustible store for a country dinner-table. And many will long remember him as he used to sit at table, his snuff-box in his hand, and a glass of genial wine before him, repeating some favourite passage, and glancing his fine brown eyes about him as he recited.

In 1840, the people of Woodbridge were pleased to name a native boat after their illustrious compatriot. In his own words in a letter to a friend—

Some of my townsmen . . . took it into their heads to name a schooner, built at this port, after their Woodbridge poet. The parties were not literary people, or great readers or lovers of verse ; I am not sure that they ever read a page of mine. But I suppose they thought a poet creditable, some how or other, to a port ; and so they did me that honour, for which I am vastly their debtor.

The letter is interrupted here to insert the lines "To the Bernard Barton Schooner," from which a quotation is made in its next sentence :

Glide gently down thy native stream,
 And swell thy snowy sail
 Before fair April's morning beam,
 And newly waken'd gale.

Thine onward course in safety keep,
 By favouring breezes fann'd,
 Along the billows of the deep
 To Mersey's distant strand.

Thou bearest no such noble name
 As all who read may know ;
 But one at least that well may claim
 The blessing I bestow.

That name was given to honour me
 By those with whom I dwell ;
 And cold indeed my heart would be
 Did I not speed thee well.

Not all the glory those acquire,
 Who far for glory roam,
 Can match the humble heart's desire
 For love fulfill'd at home.

The letter goes on :

The stanza

Thou bear'st no proud or lofty name
 Which all who read must know,¹

is no flight of voluntary humility on my part, but a simple record of a positive fact ; for the captain has told me he has been asked over and over again, up the Mersey, the Humber, the Severn, and I know not where else, what *person* or *place*

1 This difference in the wording of the stanza is to be accounted for by the fact, that when Miss Barton and Mr. Fitzgerald were preparing the poems for the volume of selections, they made such changes as seemed to them wise. The poet was no loser by their alterations. In every case where possible the quotations in these pages have been made from the amended versions.

his ship is named after? and I fancy the poor fellow has been at some pains to convince inquirers that among my own folk I really pass for somebody. At any rate, his vessel was once put down in the shipping list, among the arrivals at some far-off port, as ‘*The Barney Burton.*’

Writing earlier about the launch of the “Bernard Barton,” the poet states that even if the offer had been made to him of a large vessel, he would have given “his vote, most cordially, for the schooner ‘B.B.’ at Woodbridge,” adding,

I have so decided a preference for humbler fame of home growth, awarded by folks that I have lived among for thirty-five years, and am linked to by numberless and nameless ties of neighbourly, social, and friendly sympathy. With these feelings thou wilt readily feel and understand that the B. B. is a bit of a pet with me, and I really believe I have as much interest in her well-doing as if I held a share in her. . . . Our ancestors, who used to be devout in their phraseology, even about business, had in their old printed bills of lading a phrase, now, I believe, gone out of fashion, and, after stating the cargo, and the time allowed for the voyage and delivery, the old finale ran thus—‘and so God speed the good ship, and send her safe to her desired port.’ . . . I thought this evening, as I turned away from the quay, I could echo the old phrase very cordially.

‘Barney Burton,’ a funny enough variant of the Quaker poet’s name, was not the only misunderstanding of the kind; for, in 1822, one of his nieces wrote to tell him that some friends who recently had been to Paris had seen there a dramatic performance by English actors, one of whom was named Barton. During the

evening a member of the audience "called out to inquire if it was the Quaker Poet."

"In earlier life," says Mr. FitzGerald, "Bernard Barton had been a fair pedestrian," and was in the habit of rambling easily about the Woodbridge country, "to the vale of Dedham, Constable's birth-place and painting-room; or to the neighbouring sea-coast, loved for its own sake—and few could love the sea and the heaths beside it better than he did—but doubly dear to him for its association with the memory and poetry of Crabbe." Or he would stray to Playford to see his good friends Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Biddell—Playford, of which he sweetly sang :

Upon a hill side green and fair
The happy traveller sees
White cottages creep here and there,
Between the tufts of trees ;
With a white farm-house on the brow,
And an old grey Hall below,
With moat and garden round ;
And on a Sabbath wandering near,
Through all the quiet place you hear
A Sabbath-breathing sound
Of the church-bell slowly swinging
In an old grey tower above
The wooded hill, where birds are singing
In the deep quiet of the grove ;—
And when the bell shall cease to ring,
And the birds no longer sing,
And the grasshopper is heard no more,
A sound of praise, of prayer,
Rises along the air,
Like the sea murmur from a distant shore.

In order the more often to have the pleasure of his company, Mr. Biddell lent Bernard Barton a horse, but the poet found walking more to his liking. These walks had a powerful influence upon him, traceable in every line of his descriptive and personal verse. In Suffolk—wrote Mr. FitzGerald in a local paper, with the object of exciting such an interest among its readers as should cause a popular protest against the wholesale fellers of the county's trees—

in Suffolk, there is nothing but cheerful home-scenery, as it is called,—scenery not grand and large, but bounded, peaceful, agreeable, and homely ; the scattered farmhouses, with their gables and tufted elms ; the neat, clean villages ; the walk through the trim cornfield or down the low meadow ; the hawthorn lane, rich in primroses, violets, wild roses, honeysuckle, briony, clematis, each in its season ; and in autumn, with the golden decay of the maple ; such beauties indeed as man has entirely under his hand, to make or mar, like a garden.

And as one turns over the pages of the Quaker Poet's volumes, the mind's eye rests upon just such smiling scenes of peaceful life.

In his later years, Bernard Barton walked abroad but rarely. To quote the Memoir again,

He gradually got to dislike exercise very much, and no doubt greatly injured his health by its disuse. But it was not to be wondered at, that having spent the day in the uncongenial task of 'figure-work,' as he called it, he should covet his evenings for books, or verses, or social intercourse. It was very difficult to get him out even for a stroll in the garden after dinner, or along the banks of his favourite

Deben on a summer evening. He would, after going a little way, with much humorous grumbling at the useless fatigue he was put to endure, stop short of a sudden, and, sitting down in the long grass by the river-side, watch the tide run past, and the well-known vessels gliding into harbour, or dropping down to pursue their voyage under the stars at sea, until his companions, returning from their prolonged walk, drew him to his feet again to saunter homeward far more willingly than he set forth, with the prospect of the easy chair, the book, and the cheerful supper before him.

That when he did walk his eyes were not idle is amply proved by such poems—still favourites with Suffolk readers—as (to name no others) “The Valley of Fern,” the Burstal sonnets, “Great Bealings Churchyard,” and the descriptive stanzas in “Napoleon.” With the lines “To the Deben” this chapter may fittingly be closed :

No stately villas, on thy side,
May be reflected in thy tide ;
No lawn-like parks, outstretching round,
The willing loiterer's footsteps bound
By woods, that cast their leafy shade,
Or deer that start across the glade :
No ruin'd abbey, grey with years,
Upon thy marge its pile uprears ;
Nor crumbling castle, valour's hold,
Recalls the feudal days of old.

Nor dost thou need that such should be,
To make thee, Deben, dear to me :
Thou hast thy own befitting charms,
Of quiet heath and fertile farms,
With here and there a copse to fling
Its welcome shade, where wild birds sing ;

'Thy meads, for flocks and herds to graze ;
'Thy quays and docks, where seamen raise
'Their anchor, and unfurl their sail
'To woo and win the favouring gale.

And, above all, for me thou hast
Endearing memories of the past !
'Thy winding banks, with grass o'ergrown,
By me these forty years well known,
Where, eve or morn, 'tis sweet to rove,
Have oft been trod by those I love ;
By those who, through life's by-gone hours,
Have strew'd its thorny paths with flowers,
And by thy influence made thy stream
A grateful poet's favourite theme.

CHAPTER III.

HOME LIFE.

Penates ! in my partial eyes,
Might I to idols bow,
You, of all heathen deities,
Should claim my grateful vow.

The Naiades of the dark blue sea,
The Dryads of the grove,
However lovely these might be,
Could never win my love.

But you, beside *the household hearth*,
Domestic worship shared ;
And thoughts which owed to home their birth,
Your social rites prepared.

To the Penates.

BERNARD BARTON'S home life was singularly placid and serene. When he and his daughter were alone together each other's company was all-sufficing ; when visitors called it was as though the family was increased by so many. Company manners and bustling ceremony were alike unknown. Among his guests it was admitted without

demur that there was no host like Bernard Barton. His rooms were small, his purse was small, but his heart was boundless. He was full of sunshine; in Mr. FitzGerald's phrase, he was used whether at home or abroad to "radiate good humour around him." And when we remember this, and remember also how incomplete was the private life of many of his great poetical contemporaries, we are almost glad that Bernard Barton was denied the highest gift of song. It would not be surprising to find that in the sum of things the radiation of good humour in Woodbridge is of more import than the composition (say) of many "Queen Mabs."

From the time of Bernard Barton's removal into the Bank house, when he was just entering his fifth decade, until his death, the even tenour of the way of father and daughter was hardly disturbed. "Amiable as Bernard Barton was in social life," says Mr. FitzGerald, "his amiability in this little *tête-à-tête* household of his was yet a fairer thing to behold; so completely was all authority absorbed into confidence, and into love.

' A constant flow of love, that knew no fall,
Ne'er roughen'd by those cataracts and breaks
That humour interposed too often makes,'¹

but gliding on uninterruptedly for twenty years, until death concealed its current from all human witness." Their habits were of the simplest. By day there were duties of the ledger and

¹ From Cowper's lines on the receipt of his mother's picture.

domestic business to be performed ; but the evenings were emphatically their own. Then, when no friends looked in, one or the other would read aloud, from book, letter, or paper ; or Bernard Barton would retire early to his little study, there to dash off a gossiping epistle, or correct a proof, or make a copy of verses. When composing Bernard Barton was just such a poet as the untutored mind loves to think of—the rapid amanuensis of the gods ; for he had that spontaneous fluency which induces so much amazement and yields so much undistinguished matter. He had, says Mr. FitzGerald,

a certain boyish impetuosity in pursuit of anything he had at heart, that age itself scarcely could subdue. Thus it was with his correspondence ; and thus it was with his poetry. He wrote always with great facility, almost unretarded by that worst labour of correction ; for he was not fastidious himself about exactness of thought or of harmony of numbers, and he could scarce comprehend why the public should be less easily satisfied. Or if he did labour—and labour he did at that time—still it was at task-work of a kind he liked. He loved poetry for its own sake, whether to read or to compose, and felt assured that he was employing his own talent in the cause of virtue and religion, and the blameless affections of men. No doubt he also liked praise ; though not in any degree proportional to his eagerness in publishing ; but inversely, rather. Very vain men are seldom so careless in the production of that from which they expect their reward. And Barton soon seemed to forget one book in the preparation of another ; and in time to forget the contents of all, except a few pieces that arose more directly from his heart, and so naturally attached themselves to his memory. And there was in him one

great sign of the absence of any inordinate vanity—the total want of envy. He was quite as anxious others should publish as himself; would never believe there could be too much poetry abroad; would scarce admit a fault in the verses of others, whether private friends or public authors, though after a while (as in his own case) his mind silently and unconsciously adopted only what was good in them.

At one period of his life, when the century was in its tens and twenties, poetry was his sole hobby. Anyone who has flirted ever so lightly with literature must know how tyrannical a mistress she can become: claiming every spare moment of the day and grasping many of the hours which by right belong to sleep. Says Mr. FitzGerald—

The preparation of a book was amusement and excitement to one who had little enough of it in the ordinary routine of daily life: treaties with publishers—arrangements of printing—correspondence with friends on the subject—and, when the little volume was at last afloat, watching it for a while somewhat as a boy watches a paper boat committed to the sea.

So whole-hearted a servant to literature did Mr. Barton grow to be that there was once a real danger that his eagerness to compose would bring upon him a serious illness¹; but in course of time he sobered down and took fewer and fewer liberties with his health. Before the year 1830, much of the writing fever had abated, and after that we find him devoting many more evenings to reading, hospitality, and conversation.

¹ See pages 43 and 50.

In some such words as these would Bernard Barton invite his friends to drop in :

My fireside friend, the moon to-night,
Moore says, is near the full ;
My ingle-nook is warm and bright,
If I be cold and dull.

But, that I may resemble it,
I need a guest like thee
Beside its cheerful blaze to sit
And share its warmth with me.

Iron sharpens iron—the kindling touch
Of steel strikes fire from stone ;
That friend for friend can do as much
We both of us have known.

Then come, and let us try once more,
On topics grave or gay,
How converse, or the muse's lore,
Can wile an hour away.

Let us suppose that the invitation is addressed to us. At the door our host greets us heartily with a warm hand-shake that does not loosen until he has drawn us well within his walls : a man of middle height, with a fine, open face, eminently genial ; gentle, luminous brown eyes, kindling as he talks ; brown hair, and a rich, clear voice of singular pleasantness of tone. He is clean-shaven, and dressed in dark clothes of prim cut surmounted by a white stock. He takes his own chair—one with spreading arms that welcome their owner as he welcomes us. We sit on the other side of the hearth. The conversation, enlivened with anecdote, touches rustic humours,

the last new book from London, Woodbridge gossip, the letter just received from a distant correspondent.

This letter has to be picked with some difficulty from the heap of envelopes which crowd his pockets ; for Mr. Barton had a way of thrusting his letters as soon as read into his coat, either with the idea of re-perusal in odd moments, or of displaying them to those of his acquaintances likely to be interested in their contents. He was always masculinely averse to any winnowing process, and consequently his pockets often bulged like a gamekeeper's, until his daughter resolutely set about making a thorough clearance. When at last rescued from his coat, most of the envelopes bore a circular stain, for at his afternoon tea, Mr. Barton would drink from the saucer, placing the cup the while upon some letter extracted for that purpose. But Charles Lamb's communications were never thus employed.

To return to our fireside entertainment : after the conversation has ranged over a variety of subjects, our host will perhaps suggest a chapter from the new Scott. Those who were privileged to hear him, say that Bernard Barton was always a delightful reader, but never so much so as when he came to a passage in the Scottish tongue. His musical voice readily assumed the soft northern burr, an accomplishment learned by him from his friend Mrs. Finnie, a Scotch lady. So apt a pupil was Bernard Barton that Mrs. Finnie expressed

amazement at the accuracy of his pronunciation and intonation. Scott was his favourite author to the very end. Mr. FitzGerald tells us how he went through the best of the Waverleys with Mr. Barton at regular Saturday sittings, varied occasionally by poems of Tennyson, who was then comparatively unknown to the world at large, although holding as high a place in his friend's opinion as ever he did. Of these Scott evenings Mr. FitzGerald has left a pleasant account :

Then [says he] was the volume taken down impatiently from the shelf almost before tea was over ; and at last, when the room was clear, candles snuffed, and fire stirred, he would read out, or listen to, those fine stories, anticipating with a glance, or an impatient ejaculation of pleasure, the good things he knew were coming—which he liked all the better for knowing they were coming—relishing them afresh in the fresh enjoyment of his companion, to whom they were less familiar.

The humorous parts, adds his co-reader, he relished most : “ Baillie Nicol Jarvie's dilemma at Glennaquoich, rather than Fergus McIvor's trial ; and Oldbuck and his sister Grizel, rather than the Scenes at the Fisherman's Cottage. Indeed,” he continues, “ many, I daresay, of those who only know Barton by his poetry, will be surprised to hear how much humour he had in himself, and how much he relished it in others. Especially, perhaps, in later life, when men have commonly had quite enough of ‘ domestic tragedy,’ and are glad to laugh when they can.” Scott, as has been said, was his favourite author to the very end ; it

was only three days before his death that he finished *The Heart of Midlothian*.

But although Sir Walter held the throne, other writers came very near it, as we are able to see when the reading is over and our host invites us to look at his shelves. "A man is known by his books," says the sage. Bernard Barton's pets give us his temperament in a moment. There are volumes here of all kinds: presentation copies, minor verse, and so on; but if you want that insight into a man's mind which is imparted by his library, it is useless to seek among the bright bindings and smooth backs. Look rather at the faded colours, the broken backs, the thumbed pages, which betoken continual usage. Here we find Wordsworth, affectionately called the "Daddy" in Bernard Barton's circle, and Cowper, and Crabbe, and Burns. Here also are Lamb, and Gilbert White, and Izaak Walton, and Goldsmith, and Evelyn, and John Bunyan, and Boswell. *Robinson Crusoe* is here, and here too are Carlyle's *Miscellanies* and *Past and Present*, and Lockhart's *Scott*, and one or two of the earlier Dickens'. Bernard Barton had few religious books—he preferred to read his Bible in the text rather than the commentary, by the light only of the Light within it^r—but there were some

1 Bernard Barton wrote :

Word of the Ever-living God !
 Will of His glorious Son !
 Without Thee how could earth be trod ?
 Or heaven itself be won ?
 Yet to unfold Thy hidden worth,
 Thy mysteries to reveal,
 That SPIRIT which first gave thee forth
 Thy volume must *Unseal* !

of the old Quakerwriters of whom he never tired; notably John Woolman, and the quaint John Ruddy, M.D., that self-tortured diarist who so persistently "feasted beyond holy bounds," and so penitently chronicled the backsliding.

Bernard Barton was a wise as well as a copious reader. His tastes, as we have seen, lay among familiar rather than majestic literature, but they were concerned only with the best. The critical faculty was sound within him, and he never committed that common error of allowing the nearest object to loom too large. His sonnet to Elia¹, and the following poems, are notable for just criticism. These lines are entitled "Izaak Walton":

Cheerful old man! whose pleasant hours were spent
Where Lea's still waters through their sedges glide;
Or on the fairer banks of peaceful Trent,
Or Dove hemm'd in by rocks on either side:
Thy book is redolent of fields and flowers,
Of freshly-flowing streams and honeysuckle bowers.

Although I reckon not of the rod and line,
Thou needest no such brotherhood to give
Charm to thy artless pages—they shall shine,
And thou depicted in them, long shall live
For many a one to whom thy craft may be
A thing unknown, ev'n as it is to me.

Thy love of nature, quiet contemplation,
In meadows where the world was left behind;
Still seeking with a blameless recreation
In troubled times to keep a quiet mind;
This, with thy simple utterance, imparts
A pleasure ever new to musing hearts.

¹ See page 82.

And thou hast deeper feelings to revere,
 Drawn from a fountain even more divine,
 That blend thine own with memories as dear,
 With names our hearts with gratitude enshrine ;—
 Holy George Herbert, Wotton, Ken, and Donne,
 The pious Hooker, Cranmer, Sanderson.

And this is a sonnet on “Selborne,” Gilbert White’s village :

That quiet vale ! it greets my vision now,
 As when we saw it, one autumnal day,
 A cloudless sun brightening each feathery spray
 Of woods that clothed the Hanger to its brow :
 Woods, whose luxuriance hardly might allow
 A peep at that small hamlet, as it lay,
 Bosom’d in orchard-plots and gardens gay,
 With here and there a field, perchance, to plough.
 Delightful valley ! still I own thy claim ;
 As when I gave thee one last lingering look,
 And felt thou wast indeed a fitting nook
 For him to dwell in, whose undying name
 Has unto thee bequeath’d its humble fame,
 Pure, and imperishable—like his book !

But even a better test of Bernard Barton’s discrimination and sense of proportion is his attitude towards his own poetry :

I frankly own
 Myself no lofty poet,

he wrote when at the zenith of his popularity, and in 1844 these words occur in a letter to a publisher :

I think it grows time for me to make my bow and retire from the vain and unprofitable vocation. No man can go on scribbling verse for ever, and not weary out his readers or himself. I begin to feel somewhat of the latter symptoms ; I think it very likely my readers may have gotten the start of me.

That Bernard Barton's taste in art was equally sound, we shall soon have occasion to see ; for after we have sufficiently handled his books, our host suggests a tour of the walls while supper is preparing, himself holding the lamp before each dear possession as we pause to admire. B.B. (as he was called among his friends) was rich in pictures.

"With little practical knowledge," says Mr. FitzGerald,

he was very fond of them, especially such as represented scenery familiar to him—the shady lane, the heath, the corn-field, the village, the sea-shore. And he loved, after coming away from the Bank, to sit in his room and watch the twilight steal over his landscapes as over the real face of nature, and then lit up again by fire or candle light.

It is thus that we see them now. There are, first and foremost, the portrait of his father, described in full in a later chapter, and the dearly loved sketches of Ive-Gill, the ancestral home, and of the old Woodbridge house of his wife's mother. Then there are a farm scene, by Constable, in his earlier and more subdued manner—a very beautiful work ; an Old Crome, a masterpiece of this great painter, depicting a rain-cloud bursting over a peaceful mere at evening, full of that peculiar mellow softness which is now associated with the name of Corot ; a sketch of Norwich market-place on a busy market day, by Cotman, in the early style of water-colour ; and a portrait of Stothard, by Northcote. Bernard Barton had another Northcote, which he "opined to be by Opie," a tiny sketch of a villainous head, called by the dealer "The

Poacher," by Mr. FitzGerald, who gave it to the poet, "Bill Sykes," and by Bernard Barton himself "Peter Bell." Also we see many paintings of Woodbridge, by Tom Churchyard, of whom more will be found later, and Perry Nursey, a Suffolk artist, "in whose sketches," said Mr. FitzGerald, "there is as genuine a feeling of Nature as in Rubens' and Claude's;" a gipsy fortune-teller, with a beautiful English face—a veritable Romney; a small group by Lancret; Lamb's coloured print, in the frame patched up by himself and Tom Hood¹; a replica by Frost, of Ipswich, of a pastoral scene by Gainsborough; one or two water-colours, copies of pictures at Boulge, by Edward FitzGerald; and an exquisite Madonna and Child, after Raphael, painted on china by a master hand.²

Many of these pictures were stationary and as much a part of the house as himself, but

1 See page 103.

2 The gift of Mary Frances FitzGerald. B.B. wrote some stanzas suggested by the picture, of which these are the first two:

I may not change the simple faith,
 In which from childhood I was bred;
 Nor could I, without scorn, or scathe,
 The living seek among the dead;
 My soul has far too deeply fed
 On what no painting can express,
 To bend the knee, or bow the head,
 To aught of pictured loveliness.

And yet, Madonna! when I gaze
 On charms unearthly, such as thine;
 Or glances yet more reverent raise
 Unto that infant, so Divine!
 I marvel not that many a shrine
 Hath been, and still is reared to thee,
 Where mingled feelings might combine
 To bow the head and bend the knee.

Mr. Barton was continually picking up some clever or attractive sketch, keeping it awhile, and then giving it away or exchanging it for another. Mr. FitzGerald gives this account of his friend's method of acquiring treasures :

Nor could any itinerant picture-dealer pass Mr. Barton's door without calling to tempt him to a new purchase. And then was B.B. to be seen, just come up from the Bank, with broad-brim and spectacles on, examining some picture set before him on a chair in the most advantageous light ; the dealer recommending, and Barton wavering, until partly by money, and partly by exchange of some older favourites, with perhaps a snuff-box thrown in to turn the scale, a bargain was concluded—generally to B.B.'s great disadvantage and great content.

Then friends were called in to admire ; and letters written to describe ; and the picture taken up to his bedroom to be seen by candle light on going to bed, and by the morning sun on awaking ; then hung up in the best place in the best room ; till in time perhaps it was itself exchanged away for some newer favourite.

So much for Bernard Barton as host and connoisseur. When need came he could be sympathising friend and adviser too ; and many were the anxious ones who went to the Quaker Poet for an encouraging word or a ray of light to illumine their darkness. As the writer of a memorial notice in a Suffolk paper expressed it—

However the rebound of native and long-nourished humour in the hours of release from worldly business would gladden his accustomed associates, or astonish stranger visitants, the joke and cheerful tale were not his sole accomplishments, nor the stores of even the richest fanci-

ful literature the only spring whence his feelings sought refreshment. Some who were used to commune with him in single fellowship, and without the ministration of any written records, know that he was fully able to appreciate and to yield instruction from the deep hidden sources of pious meditation.

How delicately and tenderly he could proffer sympathy is testified by such poems as "To a Friend, on the Death of Her Father" and "To a Friend in Distress."¹

¹ Quoted on page 178.

CHAPTER IV.

EARLY FRIENDS.

Thus fares it with the human mind,
Which Heaven has seem'd to bless
With a capacity to find
In friendship happiness :—
Its earliest and its brightest years
Predict no pangs, forebode no fears ;
No doubts awake distress :
Within it finds a cloudless sun,
Without, a friend in every one.

On the Alienation of Friends in the Prime of Life.

IN dealing with Bernard Barton's friends it has been found necessary to divide them into more or less elastic groups. That they have been parcelled into companies labelled "Early Friends," "More Friends," and "Friends of Later Days," is for the sake of convenience only, for many of them overlapped the period in which they are placed, and occasionally there is one — Thomas Hurd, for example — who might with equal propriety

figure in any of the three chapters. Again, Bernard Barton's sisters died only a few years before himself, whereas his brother survived him, but it was thought best that they should be placed first on the roll of his friendships by virtue of their nearness to him. And in every other case some similarly cogent reason has determined the position of friends of long standing.

As we have seen, Bernard Barton had two sisters and one half-brother. The sisters were Maria, said to be very like him in the face, and Eliza, both being his senior; the brother, John, was younger by nearly ten years. Maria on her marriage became Maria Hack, under which name she issued numerous instructive books for children, which at the beginning of the century were found in every Quaker school-room. When Bernard was a child he was much in the company of this sister, who was both his playmate and teacher; "a sort of oracle to me," he says. And writing elsewhere he calls her "Almost the first human being I remember to have fondly loved, or been fondly loved by." Bernard Barton dedicated to his sister Maria his first important volume—the *Poems* of 1820. She died in 1844, at the age of sixty-six.

Eliza Barton, the other sister, never married. Bernard alludes to her in a letter to Mrs. Shawe, written in 1837, as a "discreet, sedate, and deliberate spinster of sixty and more, with a head as white as snow," and again in the same communication, as "my dear, good, orderly

old maiden sister." She lived a quiet, helpful life, and was a devoted daughter to her step-mother. Bernard addressed to this sister the charming dedication of the minor verse in the *Napoleon* volume of 1822 :

I would not, love ! prefix a name like thine
 To verse that dwelt on ills which flow from strife :
 That name is one Affection would entwine
 Among those lovelier things that sweeten life.

But these, with feelings of fraternal love,
 And with an author's mingled hopes and fears,
 These I to THEE would offer.—May they prove
 Dear to thy heart for 'days of other years' !¹

Of John Barton, who lived at Stoughton, near Chichester, whither Bernard gladly went as often as could be, Mr. FitzGerald wrote in one of his letters to Bernard—

I should much like to see your Platonic Brother. By your account he must have a very perfect mental organisation : or, phrenologically speaking, he must be fully and

I Eliza Barton was by way of being a versifier herself, as the following stanzas, written in reply to a request for a poem from her niece, go to show :

'An original poem?' Fie on it, my love,
 How on such a request couldst thou stumble?
 And what didst thou think would the consequence prove,
 But to set my poor brains in a jumble?
 Consider, I'm not like thy Father, whose Muse
 Is so kind he has only to beckon,
 And whatever the theme which his Bardship may choose,
 On her aid he securely may reckon.
 But for me, 'twould of labour and pains be a waste
 To ransack for rhymes my invention;
 And the Muse, while I strove to display my fine taste,
 Would laugh at my empty pretention.
 Then believe me, my Lucy, I love thee no less,
 Though I take my own method to shew it :
 And in plain simple prose my good wishes express,
 An affectionate Aunt, but no Poet.

equally furnished with the bumps of ideality and causality : which, as Bacon would say, are the two extreme poles on which the perfect 'sound and roundabout' intellect is balanced. A great deficiency of the causality bump causes me to break short in a long discussion which I meant to have favoured you with on this subject. I hope to meet your Brother one of these days : and to learn much from him.

Several of Bernard's poems are addressed to John Barton, and *A Widow's Tale* (1827) was affectionately inscribed to him with this quatrain :

Thou bear'st our father's name ; in thee
His worth and talents live ;
Canst thou need more—to claim from me
The little I can give ?

One of Bernard Barton's earliest Woodbridge friends was William Hamilton Finnie, who was for many years barrack-master in the town. At one time the two men were almost inseparable. At this late day it is difficult to get personal facts about Mr. Finnie, but there can be no doubt that he was a notably good man. In the footnote added to "Stanzas composed while walking on the Warren Hill," within sight of Mr. Finnie's grave, Bernard Barton describes him as "a man no less respected for the uprightness of his character than beloved for his social qualifications" ; and in the lines that follow the poet thus addresses his dead friend :

Silent and sad is the place of thy rest,
Where thou sleep'st the last slumber decreed thee ;
But well I remember, when warm was that breast,
How few in gay mirth could exceed thee.

* * * * *

Thine was not the laughter which leaves us more sad ;
 Unnatural, unheeded, unglowing ;
 'Twas a gush of enjoyment, which seem'd to be glad
 To get loose from a heart overflowing.

* * * * *

Thy sterling integrity, candour, and sense,
 Thy benevolence, frank and warm-hearted,
 Which sham'd the professions of empty pretence :
 These live, though thy life has departed.

It was the same dead friend that inspired
 the beautiful poem "The Solitary Tomb" :

Not a leaf of the poplar above me stirr'd,
 Though it stir with a breath so lightly ;
 Not a farewell note sang the sweet singing bird
 To the sun that was setting brightly.

I stood alone on the quiet hill,
 The quiet vale before me ;
 And the spirit of nature serene and still
 Gather'd around and o'er me.

Afar was the Deben, whose briny flood
 By its winding banks was sweeping ;
 And under the hill-side where I stood
 The dead in their graves were sleeping.

Quiet and lovely their resting-place seem'd,
 Where trouble could never enter ;
 And sweetly the rays of sunset beam'd
 On the lonely tomb in its centre.

When at morn or eve I have wander'd here,
 And in many moods have view'd it,
 With many a form to memory dear
 My fancy has endued it.

Now it has looked like a lonely sail
 Far away on the deep green billow ;
 And now like a lamb in the grassy vale,
 Asleep on its verdant pillow.

He that lies under was on the seas
In his youth a fearless ranger ;
Borne on the billow, and blown by the breeze,
Little cared he for danger.

And yet through peril and toil he kept
The freshness of gentlest feeling ;
Never a tear has woman wept
A tenderer heart revealing.

But here he sleeps—and many there are
Who love his lone tomb and revere it ;
And one who, like yon evening star,
Far away, yet is ever near it.

The solitary tomb has now only too many companions, and is itself razed to the ground and almost undecipherable. The barracks exist no longer, nothing but some farm buildings marking their place ; but in Mr. Finnie's day, in 1814, they were probably the focus of the town. Old men are still living who can recall something of the fever of those stirring times, when a cyclone of fear and excited suspense swept over the southern and eastern coasts of England. One ancient Woodbridge inhabitant distinctly remembers being awakened at dead of night by a clattering of hoofs in the road mingled with the sound of shouts and hurrying feet. "The French have landed at Hollesley bay! Boney is marching on Woodbridge"! so the neighbours cried as they shivered with cold and fright. And then on the summit of Warren Hill a bugle called, and a few minutes later down came the regiment with a fine show of courage, and away through the

echoing streets they galloped, calling lights to the windows as by magic and striking fire in many a young heart. It was only a test alarm arranged by the Army authorities, and before morning the men were in quarters again ; but for an hour or so Woodbridge had felt the true martial glow, the never to be wholly stifled joy of the invitation to the fray.

In the early twenties Mr. Barton carried on a copious correspondence with the Rev. Charles Benjamin Tayler, the curate of Hadleigh, who was then, and who continued to be until a few years ago, a prolific writer of devotional and didactic books, the best known of which was a collection of stories entitled *May You Like It*, which was rather popular in its day. In Bernard Barton's criticism of this work we get another glimpse of his sunny temperament, his inveterate preference for the genial and unsullied side of life. In his letter to the author he entreats him to write other stories "where the appeals to one's feelings are less frequent—I mean one's sympathetic feelings with suffering virtue—and the more pleasurable emotions called forth of the spectacle of quiet, unobtrusive, domestic happiness more dwelt on." As a pendant to the above critical suggestion comes a sly hit at his friend's literary bent towards guilt and grief, when on Mr. Tayler's long neglect to answer a letter, B.B. proposes "to rob him on the highway, in hopes of recovering an interest by crime which he supposed everyday good conduct had lost." At another time he writes thus sturdily and sensibly concerning *Poetic Vigils*—

As to its Quakerism, I meant it should be Quakerish. I hope to grow more so in my next—else, why am I a Quaker? My love to the whole visible, ay, and the whole invisible church of Christ, is not lessened by increased affection to the little niche of it in which I may happen to be planted. The bird would not mourn the less the fall of the tree which held its nest, because in that nest was found the first and primary source of its own little hopes and fears. How absurdly some people think and reason about Sectarianism! In its purer and better element it is no bad thing—not a bit worse than patriotism, which need never damp the most generous and enlarged philanthropy. When I no longer love thee, dear Charles, because thou art a Churchman, I will begin to think my Quakerism is degenerating.

Here is a letter in a different key. Mr. Tayler, it seems, had asked his friend to recommend a Quaker cook, and Bernard Barton replies :

But what, my dear friend, could put it into thy head to think of a Quaker cook, of all nondescripts? Charles Lamb would have told thee better : he says he never could have relished even the salads Eve dressed for the angels in Eden—his appetite is too highly excited ‘to sit a guest with Daniel at his pulse.’ Go to ! thou art a wag, Charles ; and this is only a sly way of hinting that we are fond of good living. But perhaps, after all, more of compliment than of inuendo is implied in the proposition. ‘Thou thoughtest we were civil, *cleanly*, *quiet*, &c., all excellent qualities, doubtless, in women of all kinds, cooks not excluded. But, my dear friend, I should be sorry the reputation of our sect, for the possession of these qualities, should be exposed to the contingent vexations which culinary mortals are especially exposed to. ‘A cook whilst cooking is a sort of fury,’ says the old poet. Ay ! but not a Quaker cook—at least, in the favourable and friendly opinion of Adine and

thyself : we are very proud of that good opinion, and I would not risk its forfeiture by sending one of our sisterhood to thee as cook. Suppose an avalanche of soot to plump down the chimney the first gala day—'twould be Cookship *versus* Quakership whether the poor body kept her sectarian serenity unruffled ; and suppose the beam kicked the wrong way, what would become of all our reputation in the temporary good opinion of Adine and thee?

In 1825 B.B. sends to Mr. Tayler the following account (which could only have been written by a man bountifully blessed with humour) of one of the most embarrassing interviews that any poet ever can have undergone :

I met with a comical adventure the other day, which partly amused, partly piqued me. We had a religious visit paid to our little meeting here by a minister of our Society, an entire stranger, I believe, to every one in the meeting. He gave us some very plain, honest counsel. After meeting, as is usual, several, indeed most, Friends stopped to shake hands with our visitor, I among the rest ; and on my name being mentioned to him, rather officiously, I thought, by one standing by, the good old man said, 'Barton?—Barton?—that's a name I don't recollect.' I told him it would be rather strange if he did, as we had never seen each other before. Suddenly, when, to my no small gratification, no one was attending to us, he looked rather inquiringly at me and added, 'What, art thou the Versifying Man?' On my replying with a gravity which I really think was heroic, that I was called such, he looked at me again, I thought 'more in sorrow than in anger,' and observed, 'Ah ! that's a thing quite out of my way.' It was on the tip of my tongue to reply, 'I dare say it is,'—but, afraid that I could not control my risible faculties much longer, I shook my worthy friend once more by the hand, and bidding him farewell, left him. I dare say the good soul may

have since thought of me, if at all, with much the same feelings as if I had been bitten by a mad dog—and I know not but that he may be very right.

One more letter to Mr. Tayler, and then that estimable gentleman must pass from our pages. In 1824, a very precious gift came to Bernard Barton through the kindness of his friend Mrs. Sutton—nothing less than a portrait of his father. Mrs. Sutton had heard that such a portrait was in existence, and had persuaded Bernard's cousins at Carlisle to give it up. This they readily agreed to do, on the condition that the poet should send them a likeness of himself. The exchange was made, and the delight of the recipient of the oil picture was almost boundless. He writes to Mr. Tayler—

My head and heart are full, even to overflowing: my eyes are almost dim with gazing at one object, yet are still unsatisfied. I keep thinking of one thing all day, stealing to feast my eyes on it when I can, and lie down to dream of it o' nights.

Then he describes the portrait :

My dear *pater* is seated at a round table, his elbow resting on it, and his right hand as if partly supporting his head; the little finger folded down, the two fore ones extended up to his temple. Before him is a sheet of paper headed 'Abstract of Locke; the chapter on Perception,' and the first volume of Locke, open, is on his left hand, on his knee. His countenance is full of thought, yet equally full of sweetness. What an ugly fellow I am compared to him! A little further on the table is a German flute, and a piece of Handel's music, open, leaning against Akenside's 'Pleasures of Imagination.' A larger volume also lies on the table, lettered 'Kenrick's Dictionary.' . . . In the corner, just below the table, stands a globe. On the bookshelves

behind him are, first, a volume . . . 'on Euclid,' then, I think, 'Simpson's Algebra,' 'Fitzosborne's Letters,' another book lettered, I think, 'Verulam,' 'Fordyce,' 'Pope's Works,' 'Dictionary of Arts and Sciences,' two or three volumes. . . . His dress is a suit of so red a brown as almost to approach to crimson; his hair turned back from a fine clear forehead, with a curl over each ear, and tied in a sort of club behind: the ruffles at his wrists, as well as a frill, to say nothing of the flute, show that he had not then joined the Quakers. . . . His countenance is all I could wish it—(delicately fair, which I had always heard, and rather small features)—in the bloom of youth, yet thoughtful—to *me* full of intellect and benignity. Oh, how proud I am of him!

The picture, now in the possession of the family, inspired numerous other letters; and its receipt was also the occasion of the following little reciprocative poem addressed to the cousins at Carlisle:

My courteous Cousins! you have won,
Both from the Poet and the Son,
Thanks publicly recorded;
And could I hope my lay might give
Your praise in deathless verse to live,
You should be well rewarded.

But see how hopeless is my case!
Cowper, with all a Poet's grace,
And all a son's affection,
Has so pre-occupied the ground,
That my poor verse, by his, were found
Unworthy of inspection.

When I peruse the page, whose fame
Enshrines his Cousin Bodham's name,
It chills my emulation:
To rival it I could not hope;
And who, where feeling should have scope,
Could stoop to imitation?

Themes which comparisons *invite*
Put minor Bards in doleful plight ;
'Tis policy to shun them :
Then let warm thanks, in one brief line,
Content a grateful heart like mine,
And *yours*, who well have won them.

In Mr. Tayler's parish of Hadleigh dwelt the erudite Dr. Nathan Drake (1766-1836), who was the author of a large number of essays, tales, and verses, and as amiable a man as one could wish to meet. Dr. Drake, indeed, belonged to that company of genial literary physicians which includes the names of Oliver Wendell Holmes and John Brown. Bernard Barton addressed to him the following sonnet suggested by the title of one of his books :

'Mornings in Spring !'—Oh ! happy thou, indeed,
Thus with the glow of sunset to combine
Day's earlier brightness, and in life's decline
To send thought, feeling, fancy back to feed
In youth's fresh pastures, from the emerald mead
To cull Spring flowers with Autumn fruits to twine ;
And borrow from past harmonies benign
Strains sweeter far than of the pastoral reed.
Not such the lot of him who, ere his sun
Have passed its Summer solstice, feels the bloom
Of June o'ershadow'd by December gloom ;
Thankful if, when life's stormy race be run,
The humble hope that his day's work is done
May cheer the shadowy entrance to the tomb.

Another clerical friend was the Rev. John Mitford, of Benhall, a scholar, a wit, and a poet, who afterwards became editor of *The Gentleman's Magazine*. Here is one of Mr. Mitford's invitations to Bernard Barton :

Benhall, 1820.

My dear Poet,

We got your note to-day. We are at home and shall be glad to see you, but hope you will not swim here ; in other words, we think it better that you should wait till we can seat you under a chestnut and listen to your oracular sayings. We hope that, like your sister of the woods, you are in full song ; she does not print, I think ; we hope you do ; seeing that you beat her in sense, though she has a little the advantage in melody. Together you will maké a pretty duet in our groves. You have both your defects ; she devours glow-worms, you take snuff ; she is in a great hurry to go away, and you are prodigious slow in arriving ; she sings at night, when nobody can hear her, and you write for Ackermann, which nobody thinks of reading. In spite of all this, you will get a hundred a year from the King, and settle at Woodbridge ; in another month, she will find no more flies, and set off for Egypt.

Truly yours,

J. M.

How thoroughly the poet enjoyed his visits to Benhall may be learned from the following stanzas composed in Mr. Mitford's library :

O ! I methinks could dwell content
 A spell-bound captive here ;
 And find, in such imprisonment,
 Each fleeting moment dear ;—
 Dear, not to outward sense alone,
 But thought's most elevated tone.

The song of birds, the hum of bees,
 Their sweetest music make ;
 The March winds, through the lofty trees,
 Their wilder strains awake ;
 Or from the broad magnolia leaves
 A gentler gale its spirit heaves.

Nor less the eye enraptur'd roves
O'er turf of freshest green,
O'er bursting flowers, and budding groves,
And sky of changeful mien,
Where sunny glimpses, bright and blue,
'The fleecy clouds are peeping through.

'Thus sooth'd, in every passing mood,
How sweet each gifted page,
Rich with the mind's ambrosial food,
'The Muses' brighter age !
How sweet, communion here to hold
With them, the mighty Bards of old !

With them—whose master spirits yet
In deathless numbers dwell,
Whose works defy us to forget
'Their still-surviving spell ;—
'That spell, which lingers in a name,
Whose every echo whispers Fame !

Could aught enhance such hours of bliss,
It were in converse known
With him who boasts a scene like this,
An Eden of his own ;
Whose taste and talent gave it birth,
And well can estimate its worth.

It was Mr. Mitford who sent to a Wood-bridge bookseller for a copy of Shelley's "Prometheus Unbound," and received the answer that no copy of "Prometheus" *in sheets* could be obtained ; a misconception which Bernard Barton promptly forwarded to London, to Charles Lamb's great content.

CHAPTER V.

CHARLES LAMB AND QUAKERISM.

If genuine love of freedom, testified
Alike by words and deeds ; if sterling sense,
Pure taste directed by intelligence,
And candidly to liberal arts applied ;
If with such high acquirements, be allied
A heart replete with true benevolence ;
Who will assert I have not just pretence
To call their owner ' Friend,' with honest pride ?

Sonnet.

AT the present day it is probable that those few persons (outside the Society of Friends) who know anything of Bernard Barton, know him only by reason of his association with Charles Lamb. The two men first met in 1822, when the Quaker Poet was in his thirty-ninth year, and Elia in his forty-eighth, and

their friendship, carried on almost exclusively by letter, was continued during the next decade. Where and when they met is not quite clear. According to Canon Ainger it was at one of the contributors' dinners given by the proprietors of the *London Magazine*, but other authorities think that the intercourse began in writing. At their first meeting, says Canon Ainger, "Lamb had spoken playfully of the inconsistency of a Member of the Society of Friends writing poetry, and out of a friendly remonstrance in reply there arose a correspondence, long carried on with the greatest satisfaction to both." This certainly is commonly accepted as the origin of the correspondence, but in Lamb's first letter, dated September 11th, 1822, he says: "I am, like you, a prisoner at the desk," an elementary confession which it is hard to believe would not have been stated once for all in the preceding conversation, especially when one speaker was a man of Bernard Barton's frankness. It is however a trifling matter, hardly meriting inquiry. The important thing to notice is, that even had he done nothing else, Bernard Barton, by thus stimulating one of England's rarest minds to the production of so much good sense, and good fun, and good literature, would have earned the gratitude of posterity.

Leaving aside the manner of their acquaintance, there remains a good story (told also, it must be admitted, of other men than Bernard Barton) of B.B.'s first visit to Elia at the India Office. Lamb being minute of stature was used

when at his desk work to sit upon a very high stool. There was he perched when Mr. Barton was announced. At sight of his visitor, Lamb began carefully to climb down, making a circuitous descent as he stepped from one cross-bar to another, and saying encouragingly the while : "I shall revolve upon you presently, Mr. Barton; I shall revolve upon you presently."

By the year 1822, the bulk of Lamb's work was done. *Rosamund Gray*, *John Woodvil*, *Tales from Shakespeare*, *Specimens from the Dramatic Poets*, and his best poems were already published, while the finest of the *Essays of Elia* were written and awaiting publication (in 1823); henceforth he was to produce only the *Last Essays* and *Elhana*, occasional verse, the notes to the Garrick plays, and many, but not the best, of the letters. He was now, as we have seen, in his forty-eighth year, a confirmed bachelor, fighting nobly against hopeless thoughts and all unprofitable—though sadly pleasant—dwellings on what might have been. His life was dedicated to the service of his afflicted sister. New friends he now seldom made, knowing how little of the future he could call his own; and this in itself was another cross to a man so eminently fitted to love his fellows as was the author of "The Old Familiar Faces."

With Bernard Barton however he made an exception: a matter of surprise to those who only know the Quaker Poet as the utterer of pious ejaculations. We need not concern ourselves with their astonishment that Lamb, the

correspondent of Coleridge and Manning, should also become the correspondent of Bernard Barton. It is a vile thing to stir among the roots of a friendship between two men to dig out the why and wherefore of their attachment, and it shall not be done here. The affinity of true friends defies analysis. All that shall be said is, that from his youth Lamb had felt a kindness for the unobtrusiveness and unwavering rectitude of the drab folk. More than once he had entertained the idea of embracing their simple faith, although something always occurred to offend the fastidiousness of his sensitive mind. Writing to Coleridge in 1797, when twenty-two years old, he says

Tell Lloyd [Charles Lloyd, the son of the Quaker banker and philanthropist of Birmingham] I have had thoughts of turning Quaker, and have been reading, or am rather just beginning to read, a most capital book, good thoughts in good language, William Penn's *No Cross, No Crown*. I like it immensely. Unluckily, I went to one of his meetings, tell him, in St. John Street [at Cambridge] yesterday, and saw a man under all the agitations and workings of a fanatic, who believed himself under the influence of some 'inevitable presence.' This cured me of Quakerism. I love it in the books of Penn and Woolman ; but I detest the vanity of a man thinking he speaks by the Spirit.

Another link with the Society was his silent attachment to a beautiful Quakeress, Hester Savory. In March, 1803, he writes to Manning: "I send you some verses I have made on the death of a young Quaker you may have heard me speak of as being in love with for some years while I lived at Pentonville, though I had

never spoken to her in my life."¹ The poem was "Hester," a lyric of such beauty that it must be familiar to all the readers of this book.

Knowing what we do of Lamb's character, it is not surprising that the Quaker ideal always came short of his desires. He had an outspokenness, a verbal generosity—almost lavishness—in direct variance from the reticence practised in the sect at that time. What Lamb felt, he said; the Quakers, he thought, said what they ought to have felt. Again, Lamb, although a strict liver, and as a rule one of the most self-sacrificing of men, was all for the good temporal things of this life. In the essay on "Imperfect Sympathies" he puts the case thus plainly :

I love Quaker ways, and Quaker worship. I venerate the Quaker principles. It does me good for the rest of the day when I meet any of their people in my path. When I am ruffled or disturbed by any occurrence, the sight, or quiet voice of a Quaker, acts upon me as a ventilator, lightening the air, and taking off a load from the bosom. But I cannot like the Quakers (as Desdemona would say) 'to live with them.' I am all over sophisticated—with humours, fancies, craving hourly sympathy. I must have books, pictures, theatres, chit-chat, scandal, jokes, ambiguities, and a thousand whim-whams, which their simple taste can do without. I should starve at their primitive banquet.

¹ According to a writer in the deceased *Essayist and Friends Review*, Hester was the daughter of Joseph Savory, a goldsmith in the Strand. She was born on May 31st, 1777, and was married in 1802 to Charles Stoke Dudley, merchant, of Lambeth. She died in less than a year after, and was buried at Bunhill Fields. Canon Ainger, who has seen a miniature of Hester, calls her's a "bright-eyed gipsy face, such as we know so well from the canvas of Reynolds."

That primitive banquet is to-day so much nearer the sophistication which Lamb needed, that were he to return for a while to this sphere he would be unlikely to repeat the sentiments just quoted, The Society now numbers many virtuosi after Elia's own heart : jealous collectors of old oak, and old blue, and broad-margined prints ; slaves of shelf and stall

“ Who hold

Patched volumes dear, and prize the small
Rare volume, black with tarnished gold.”

Whim-whams too he would find in abundance.

Although he came quickly to the conclusion that Quakerism was not for him, Lamb's interest in the Society never flagged. He admired from the outside, read Quaker books with keen delight, adopted Quaker plainness of attire, and numbered individual Quakers among his acquaintances. References to the Society are manifold in his writings. The essay on “ A Quakers' Meeting,” which is known to all, holds another tribute to one of the most attractive characteristics of Friends. Elia writes—

Nothing-plotting, nought-caballing, un-mischievoussynod ! convocation without intrigue ! parliament without debate ! what a lesson dost thou read to council and to consistory ! if my pen treat of you lightly—as haply it will wander—yet my spirit hath gravely felt the wisdom of your custom, when, sitting among you in deepest peace, which some outwelling tears would rather confirm than disturb, I have reverted to the times of your beginnings, and the sowing of the seed by Fox and Dewesbury.—I have witnessed that which brought before my eyes your heroic tranquillity, inflexible to the rude jests and serious violences of the

insolent soldiery, republican or royalist, sent to molest you—for ye sate betwixt the fires of two persecutions, the outcast and off-scouring of church and presbytery.—I have seen the reeling sea-ruffian, who had wandered into your receptacle with the avowed intention of disturbing your quiet, from the very spirit of the place receive in a moment a new heart, and presently sit among ye as a lamb amidst lambs. And I remember Penn before his accusers, and Fox in the bail dock, when he was lifted up in spirit, as he tells us, and ‘the Judge and the Jury became as dead men under his feet.’¹

Lamb’s informal Quakerism was indeed one of his most noticeable characteristics. “There is a primitive simplicity and self-denial about his manners,” wrote Hazlitt, in *The Spirit of the Age*; “and a Quakerism in his personal appearance, which is, however, relieved by a fine Titian head, full of dumb eloquence.” He had, says Canon Ainger, impressed Leigh Hunt, when a boy, with his Quaker-like demeanour, and Hood carried away from their first meeting the impression of having conversed with a “Quaker in black.” But Lamb’s was a Quakerism shot through with bright colours. A certain spirit of mischief, which sat ever at his ear prompting him to revolution, was perhaps the chief cause of his independence of all sects. It was part of the man’s nature to differ, whether he meant it or not: conformity

¹ Of this passage Lamb writes to Bernard Barton: “I find no such words in his journal, and I did not get them from Sewell, and the latter sentence I am sure I did not mean to invent. I must have put some other Quaker’s words into his mouth. Is it a fatality in me, that everything I touch turns into ‘a lie’?”

was his bugbear. The author of the "Bridge of Sighs" has, of all his contemporaries, painted the most sympathetic portrait of Lamb. Therein is the following passage bearing upon that spirit of mischief to which we have referred :—

With a Catholic he would probably have called himself a Jew ; or amongst Quakers, by way of a set-off against their own formality, he would indulge in a little extra levity. I well remember his chuckling at having spirited on his correspondent, Bernard Barton, to commit some little enormities, such as addressing him as C. Lamb, *Esquire*.

This brings us again to Bernard Barton, in one of his letters to whom Lamb makes the confession, " In feelings and matters not dogmatical, I hope I am half a Quaker " : a remark which lets in quite enough light (though not by any means all) upon the attraction that Bernard Barton offered to Charles Lamb. Briefly (and superficially) Lamb liked Quakerism in its broader and more genial moods, and Bernard Barton personified Quakerism in its broader and more genial moods.

CHAPTER VI.

CHARLES LAMB'S LETTERS.

Delightful author ! unto whom I owe
 Moments and moods of fancy and of feeling,
 Afresh to grateful memory now appealing,
 Fain would I "bless thee—ere I let thee go !"
 From month to month has the exhaustless flow
 Of thy original mind, its wealth revealing,
 With quaintest humour, and deep pathos healing
 The World's rude wounds, revived Life's early glow :
 And, mixt with this, at times, to earnest thought
 Glimpses of truth, most simple and sublime
 By thy imagination have been brought
 Over my spirit. From the olden time
 Of authorship thy patent should be dated,
 And thou with Marvell, Brown, and Burton mated.

Sonnet to Elia.

IN Barry Cornwall's admirable memoir of
 Charles Lamb the following passage occurs,
 which is inserted in this place in order that the
 popular opinion of the relations between the two
 correspondents, herein very clearly expressed,
 may be modified :—

I have been much impressed by Lamb's letters to Bernard Barton, which are numerous, and which, taken altogether, are equal to any which he has written. The letters to Coleridge do not exhibit so much care or thought; nor those to Wordsworth or Manning, nor to any others of his intellectual equals. These correspondents could think and speculate for themselves, and they were accordingly left to their own resources. 'The Volsces have much corn.' But Bernard Barton was in a different condition: he was poor. His education had been inferior, his range of reading and thinking had been very confined, his knowledge of the English drama being limited to Shakespeare and Miss Baillie. He seems however to have been an amiable man, desirous of cultivating the power, such as it was, which he possessed; and Lamb therefore lavished upon him—the poor Quaker clerk of a Suffolk Banker—all that his wants or ambition required; excellent worldly counsel; sound thoughts upon literature and art; critical advice on his own verses; letters, which in their actual value surpass the wealth of many more celebrated collections.

With the best of intentions, the writer has been guilty of misrepresentation in the foregoing passage. That Bernard Barton was intellectually Lamb's inferior is not to be denied, but he had many compensating qualities whose influence may have been as beneficial to Lamb in their way as the sage counsels of the essayist were to the provincial poet. Mr. Barton was simple and undistinguished; but he was essentially a cultured gentleman, with broad sympathies and an innate sweetness such as no amount of learning or social intercourse can give: here he was the equal of Lamb or of any man.

The first letter contains a jest in Elia's own manner: "I am, like you, a prisoner to the desk. I have been chained to that galley thirty years,—a long shot. I have almost grown to the wood. If no imaginative poet, I am sure I am a figurative one. Do 'Friends' allow puns?" On December 23rd, 1822, he writes—

I am pleased with your liking *John Woodvil* [Lamb's play], and amused with your knowledge of our drama being confined to Shakspeare and Miss Baillie. What a world of fine territory between Land's End and Johnny Groat's have you missed traversing! I could almost envy you to have so much to read. I feel as if I had read all the books I want to read. O to forget Fielding, Steele, etc., and read 'em new!

He goes on to ask for Fox's journal, and suggests that Barton should write "a poetical account of your old worthies, deducing them from Fox to Woolman." He adds: "You have no martyrs *quite to the fire*, I think, among you; but plenty of heroic confessors, spirit-martyrs, lamb-lions." He concludes: "The 'compliments of the time' to you should end my letter; to a Friend, I suppose, I must say the 'sincerity of the season'; I hope they both mean the same."

The next letter (January 9th, 1823) is one of the most important. The kind reception of his poems by the public, and the growing irksomeness of desk-work, now and again caused Mr. Barton to think seriously of exchanging Woodbridge for London, and adopting the profession of letters in place of that of figures.

Some years before, when the desire had come upon him, a letter from Lord Byron had altered his purpose.¹ Now he asks counsel of his new adviser. Lamb's reply is for all time :

'Throw yourself on the world without any rational plan of support, beyond what the chance employ of booksellers would afford you !!!'

Throw yourself rather, my dear sir, from the steep Tarpeian rock, slap-dash headlong upon iron spikes. If you had but five consolatory minutes between the desk and the bed, make much of them, and live a century in them, rather than turn slave to the booksellers. They are Turks and Tartars when they have poor authors at their beck. Hitherto you have been at arm's length from them. Come not within their grasp. I have known many authors for bread, some repining, others envying the blessed security of a counting-house, all agreeing they would rather have been tailors, weavers—what not, rather than the things they were. I have known some starved, some to go mad, one dear friend literally dying in a workhouse. You know not what a rapacious, dishonest set these booksellers are. Ask even Southey, who (a single case almost) has made a fortune by book drudgery, what he has found them. Oh, you know not (may you never know!) the miseries of subsisting by authorship. 'Tis a pretty appendage to a situation like yours or mine; but a slavery, worse than all slavery, to be a bookseller's dependant, to drudge your brains for pots of ale and breasts of mutton, to change your free thoughts and voluntary numbers for ungracious task work. . . . Keep to your bank, and the bank will keep you. Trust not to the public; you may hang, starve, drown yourself for anything that worthy *personage* cares. I bless every star that Providence, not seeing good to make me independent, has seen it next

¹ See page 162.

good to settle me upon the stable foundation of Leadenhall. Sit down, good B. B., in the banking-office. What! is there not from six to eleven *p.m.* six days in the week, and is there not all Sunday? Fie, what a superfluity of man's time, if you could think so!—enough for relaxation, mirth, converse, poetry, good thoughts, quiet thoughts. Oh the corroding, torturing, tormenting thoughts, that disturb the brain of the unlucky wight who must draw upon it for daily sustenance! Henceforth I retract all my fond complaints of mercantile employment; look upon them as lovers' quarrels. I was but half in earnest. Welcome dead timber of a desk, that makes me live. A little grumbling is a wholesome medicine for the spleen; but in my inner heart do I approve and embrace this our close but unharassing way of life. I am quite serious.

On February 17th, 1823, Lamb refers to the "ponderous folio of George Fox," which Barton had procured for him. "A great spiritual man" is Lamb's description of the founder of Quakerism; he adds, "How I like the Quaker phrases, though I think they were hardly completed till Woolman. A pretty little manual of Quaker language (with an endeavour to explain them) might be gathered out of his book." On May 3rd, Lamb has become so steeped in the Journal and the Doctrinals that he says, "If I go on at this rate, the Society will be in danger of having two Quaker poets to patronise."

In this year appeared Southey's article charging Lamb with infidelity, which drew forth one of the most dignified remonstrances that exists in the language. The essayist tells Bernard Barton of the incident in the following words:—

Southey has attacked 'Elia' on the score of infidelity, in the *Quarterly* article, 'Progress of Infidelity.' I had not, nor have seen the *Monthly*. He might have spared an old friend such a construction of a few careless flights, that meant no harm to religion. If all his unguarded expressions were to be collected—! But I love and respect Southey, and will not retort. I hate his review, and his being a reviewer. The hint he has dropped will knock the sale of the book on the head, which was almost at a stop before. Let it stop, there is corn in Egypt, while there is cash at Leadenhall. You and I are something besides being writers, thank God!

Hitherto the two men have been, as it were, making signals of inquiry: henceforth they know one another. At least Lamb's letters now begin to have more familiarity, and "Dear B.B." becomes a regular form of address with him. It is greatly to be regretted that none of Bernard Barton's letters to his friend have been preserved. In September, 1823, Elia writes—

When you come London-ward you will find me no longer in Covent Garden. I have a cottage in Colebrook Row, Islington; a cottage, for it is detached; a white house, with six good rooms; the New River (rather elderly by this time) runs (if a moderate walking pace may so be termed) close to the foot of the house; and behind is a spacious garden with vines (I assure you), pears, strawberries, parsnips, leeks, carrots, cabbages, to delight the heart of old Alcinous. You enter without passage into a cheerful dining-room, all studded over and rough with old books: and above all is a lightsome drawing-room, three windows, full of choice prints. I feel like a great lord, never having had a house before. . . . I am so taken up with pruning and gardening, quite a new sort of occupation to me. I have gathered my jargonels, but my Windsor pears are backward. The former

were of exquisite raciness. I do now sit under my own vine, and contemplate the growth of vegetable nature. I can now understand in what sense they speak of father Adam. I recognise the paternity while I watch my tulips. I almost fell with him, for the first day I turned a drunken gardener (as he let in the serpent) into my Eden, and he laid about him, lopping off some choice boughs, etc., which hung over from a neighbour's garden, and in his blind zeal laid waste a shade, which had sheltered their window from the gaze of passers-by. The old gentlewoman (fury made her not handsome) could scarcely be reconciled by all my fine words. There was no buttering her parsnips. She talked of the law. What a lapse to commit on the first day of my happy 'garden state'!

Bernard Barton more than once accepted this invitation. An account of one of his later visits to the Islington home is contained in the following letter, kindly sent to the author by Mrs. FitzGerald:

It was rarely my lot to be in town with my dear father, but on one memorable occasion we made a call on Charles Lamb. It must have been not long after his removal to Colebrook Row. We did not see Miss Lamb, and the visit must have taken place during one of those sad lapses which so often shadowed the lives of the brother and sister. Charles Lamb had given my father to understand that his house was near the New River—'rather elderly by this time,' he said—and knowing what had happened to his short-sighted friend George Dyer, we knew that it could not be far off. Having left our omnibus and walked for some distance, we were rather at a loss to find our way, but meeting a postman the house was soon found. Some very high and rather narrow steps led up to the door, and our rap was answered by the master himself in decidedly morning undress. The door opened at once into the room in which he

was sitting. He had evidently been reading, for a large, old volume had been laid aside open on a small table drawn close to the fireside. I cannot remember whether his hair was grey. I think not; but there could be no forgetting the slight figure and the bright eyes which welcomed us. An old portrait hung over the fireplace; I know it was of some noteworthy person, whose name I cannot remember.

But what chiefly attracted me was a large old bookcase full of books! I could but think how many long walks must have been taken to bring them home, for there were but few that did not bear the mark of having been bought at many a bookstall: brown, dark-looking books, distinguished by those white tickets which told how much their owner had given for each. Readers of Lamb will remember the home-bringing of that long-wished-for copy of Beaumont and Fletcher, which, we are told, after long consideration of what saving could be hit upon that would be an equivalent to the purchase, was dragged home late one Saturday night, the happy possessor only 'wishing it were more cumbersome.' But when more favourable times came, and a set of rare old blue china could be indulged in, how touching was the sister's backward look at the old times, its trials, and its compensations! She wishes those times would come again 'when we were not quite so rich; I do not mean that I want to be poor, but a thing was worth buying then when we felt the money that we paid for it.' How beautiful is the brother's loving quickness at 'detecting these summer clouds in Bridget.' But I must leave off reading that essay¹ for my own pleasure, and end my scanty memories of that visit.

I wish I could recall what passed that day! I only remember that the talk was of books, of authors, of Southey especially, and of reviews. I cannot remember how long we were there. A luncheon of oysters, with its usual accompaniments, was brought in; our hospitable host

1 See "Old China," in the *Essays of Elia*.

equipped himself for a walk, and went with us until he saw us into the right omnibus, and with cordial farewells that memorable morning ended.

I believe that once again I saw that bookcase. I was taken by some friends to call on Miss Lamb some little time after her brother's death. When I was introduced to her, a chair was placed for me close to her own. She took my hand, looked intently at me (my dress happened to be of blue muslin), and stroked down my skirts once or twice, saying, with a look of surprise and perhaps of slight reproach, '*Bernard Barton's daughter!*' But I think she soon forgave my un-Quakerly appearance, for she presently took my arm, and led me up to a bookcase, before which we paced up and down, now and then stopping to look at it, and even to touch it. Surely at that moment we both remembered Colebrook Row!

On November 22nd, 1823, Lamb writes: "Is it possible a letter has miscarried? Did you get one in which I sent you an extract from the poems of Lord Stirling? I should wonder if you did, for I sent you none such. There was an incipient lie strangled in the birth. Some people's conscience is so tender!" Then comes some excellent advice about brooding over bodily ills, for Mr. Barton was at that time a sufferer from a disease brought on or aggravated by his sedentary life and refusal to take reasonable exercise. Says Lamb—

You are too much apprehensive of your complaint: I know many that are always ailing of it, and live on to a good old age. I know a merry fellow (you partly know him) who, when his medical adviser told him he had drunk away all *that part*, congratulated himself (now his liver was gone) that he should be the longest liver of the two

The best way in these cases is to keep yourself as ignorant as you can, as ignorant as the world was before Galen, of the entire inner construction of the animal man ; not to be conscious of a midriff ; to hold kidneys (save of sheep and swine) to be an agreeable fiction ; not to know whereabout the gall grows ; to account the circulation of the blood an idle whimsey of Harvey's ; to acknowledge no mechanism not visible. For, once fix the seat of your disorder, and your fancies flux into it like bad humours. Those medical gentries choose each his favourite part ; one takes the lungs, another the aforesaid liver, and refer to that whatever in the animal economy is amiss. Above all, use exercise, take a little more spirituous liquors, learn to smoke, continue to keep a good conscience, and avoid tampering with hard terms of art—viscosity, scirrhusity, and those bugbears by which simple patients are scared into their graves. Believe the general sense of the mercantile world, which holds that desks are not deadly. It is the mind, good B.B., and not the limbs, that taints by long sitting. Think of the patience of tailors ! Think how long the Lord Chancellor sits ! Think of the brooding hen !¹

Only Lamb could have written the letter of January 9th, 1824, which shall be quoted entire :

Dear B.B.,—

Do you know what it is to succumb under an unsurmountable daymare, — ‘a whoreson lethargy,’ as Falstaff calls it,—an indisposition to do anything, or to be anything,—a total deadness and distaste, a suspension of vitality,—an indifference to locality,—a numb, soporifical, good-for-nothingness,—an ossification all over,—an oyster-like insensibility to the passing events,—a mind-stupor,—a brawny defiance to the needles of a thrusting-in conscience ? Did you ever have a very bad cold, with a total irresolution to submit to water-gruel processes ? This has been for

¹ See p. 165 for a letter from Southey to the same effect.

many weeks my lot and my excuse. My fingers drag heavily over this paper, and to my thinking it is three-and-twenty furlongs from here to the end of this demi-sheet. I have not a thing to say ; nothing is of more importance than another ; I am flatter than a denial or a pancake ; emptier than Judge Park's wig when the head is in it ; duller than a country stage when the actors are off it ; a cipher, an O ! I acknowledge life at all, only by an occasional convulsional cough, and a permanent phlegmatic pain in the chest. I am weary of the world ; life is weary of me. My day is gone into twilight, and I don't think it worth the expense of candles. My wick hath a thief in it, but I can't muster courage to snuff it. I inhale suffocation ; I can't distinguish veal from mutton ; nothing interests me. 'Tis twelve o'clock, and Thurtell is just now coming out upon the New Drop, Jack Ketch alertly tucking up his greasy sleeves to do the last office of mortality ; yet cannot I elicit a groan or a moral reflection. If you told me the world will be at an end to-morrow, I should just say, 'Will it ?' I have not volition enough to dot my i's, much less to comb my eyebrows ; my eyes are set in my head ; my brains are gone out to see a poor relation in Moorfields, and they did not say when they'd come back again ; my skull is a Grub Street attic, to let . . . my hand writes, not I, from habit, as chickens run about a little when their heads are off. O, for a vigorous fit of gout, cholic, toothache,—an earwig in my auditory, a fly in my visual organs ! Pain is life—the sharper, the more evidence of life ; but this apathy, this death ! Did you ever have an obstinate cold,—a six or seven weeks' unintermitting chill and suspension of hope, fear, conscience, and everything ? Yet do I try all I can to cure it ; I try wine, and spirits, and smoking, and snuff in unsparing quantities ; but they all only seem to make me worse, instead of better. I sleep in a damp room, but it does me no good ; I come home late o' nights, but do not find any visible amendment ! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death ?

It is just fifteen minutes after twelve. Thurtell is by this time a good way on his journey, baiting at Scorpion perhaps ; Ketch is bargaining for his cast coat and waistcoat. The Jew demurs at first at three half-crowns ; but, on consideration that he may get somewhat by showing 'em in the town, finally closes.

C. L.

Bernard Barton seems to have been disturbed or puzzled by his friend's somewhat violent levity, for in his next letter, two weeks after, Lamb expresses contrition. The *Essays of Elia* had just been excluded from the Woodbridge Book Club by a majority of the members, some of whom were Friends, and their author remarks : "Your account of my blackballing amused me. *I think, as Quakers, they did right.*"

On February 23rd, 1824, Lamb writes, with reference to his laxity as a correspondent—

And yet I am accounted by some people a good man ! How cheap that character is acquired ! Pay your debts, don't borrow money, nor twist your kitten's neck off, nor disturb a congregation, etc., your business is done. I know things (thoughts or things, thoughts *are* things) of myself, which would make every friend I have fly me as a plague patient. I once * * *, and set a dog upon a crab's leg that was shoved out under a mass of seaweeds,—a pretty little feeler. Oh pah ! how sick I am of that ! and a lie, a mean one, I once told !—I stink in the midst of respect. I am much hypt. The fact is, my head is heavy, but there is hope ; or if not, I am better than a poor shell-fish ; not morally, when I set the whelp upon it, but have more blood and spirits. Things may turn up, and I may creep again into a decent opinion of myself. Vanity will return with the sunshine. Till then, pardon my neglects, and impute it to the wintry solstice.

In this year (1824) Bernard Barton received a thoughtful and magnificent present of £1,200, collected among his friends in the Society, and the members of his family. The chief contributors to the testimonial were Joseph John Gurney, whose unobtrusive benefactions knew no limit, and the Mr. Shewell, of Ipswich, who lent *George Fox's Journal* to Charles Lamb. The Quaker poet was at first doubtful about accepting such a sum, and wrote to Lamb for guidance. The answer is another proof of the sanity of Elia's true genius :—

Dear B.B.,—I hasten to say that if my opinion can strengthen you in your choice, it is decisive for your acceptance of what has been so handsomely offered. I can see nothing injurious to your most honourable sense. Think that you are called to a poetical Ministry—nothing worse ; the Minister is worthy of the hire. The only objection I feel is founded on a fear that the acceptance may be a temptation to you to let fall the bone (hard as it is) which is in your mouth, and must afford tolerable pickings, for the shadow of independence. You cannot propose to become independent on what the low state of interest could afford you from such a principal as you mention ; and the most graceful excuse for the acceptance would be, that it left you free to your voluntary functions. That is the less *light* part of the scruple. It has no darker shade. I put in *darker* because of the ambiguity of the word 'light,' which Donne, in his admirable poem on the Metempsychosis, has so ingeniously illustrated in his invocation :

‘ Make my *dark*¹ *heavy*² poem, *light*¹ and *light*².’

where the two senses of *light* are opposed to different opposites. A trifling criticism. I can see no reason for any scruple then but what arises from your own interest ; which

is in your own power of course to solve. If you still have doubts, read over Sanderson's *Cases of Conscience* and Jeremy Taylor's *Ductor Dubitantium*; the first a moderate octavo, the latter a folio of 900 close pages; and when you have thoroughly digested the admirable reasons *pro* and *con* which they give for every possible case, you will be—just as wise as when you began. Every man is his own best casuist; and after all as Ephraim Smooth, in the pleasant comedy of *Wild Oats* has it 'there is no harm in a Guinea.' *A fortiori* there is less in 2000.

I therefore most sincerely congratulate with you, excepting so far as excepted above. If you have fair prospects of adding to the principal, cut the Bank; but in either case do not refuse an honest service. Your heart tells you it is not offered to bribe you *from* any duty, but *to* a duty which you feel to be your vocation.—Farewell heartily. C. L.

The sum was invested in Mr. Shewell's name, its yearly interest being paid to Mr. Barton. In 1839, however, much of the principal was employed in the purchase of the cottage at Woodbridge, dear to the poet as the dwelling-place of his wife's mother, Martha Jesup.

In the next letter (April, 1824) Lamb rambles thus:

Is Sunday, not divinely speaking, but humanly and holidaysically, a blessing? Without its institution, would our rugged taskmasters have given us a leisure day, so often, think you, as once in a month? or, if it had not been instituted, might they not have given us every sixth day? Solve me this problem. If we are to go three times a day to church, why has Sunday slipped into the notion of a *holliday*? A *Holyday* I grant it. The Puritans, I have read in Southey's book, knew the distinction. They made people observe Sunday rigorously, would not let a nursery-maid walk out

in the fields with children for recreation on that day. But *then*—they gave the people a holiday from all sorts of work every second Tuesday. This was giving to the two Cæsars that which was *his* respective. Wise, beautiful, thoughtful, generous legislators !

* * * * *

I am sitting opposite a person who is making strange distortions with the gout, which is not unpleasant—to me at least. What is the reason we do not sympathise with pain, short of some terrible surgical operation? Hazlitt, who boldly says all he feels, avows that not only he does not pity sick people, but he hates them. I obscurely recognise his meaning. Pain is probably too selfish a consideration, too simple a consideration of self-attention. We pity poverty, loss of friends, etc.—more complex things, in which the sufferer's feelings are associated with others.

He concludes by suggesting a comic title for the *Poetic Vigils* :

What do you think of . . . *Religio Tremuli?* or *Tremebundi?* There is *Religio-Medici* and *Laici*. . . . While I have space, let me congratulate with you the return of Spring : what a summery Spring too ! all those qualms about the dog and cray-fish melt before it. I am going to be happy and *vain* again.

A fine appreciation of Blake is omitted as being beside the question, and we pass over references to Shelley and Byron. On September 30th, 1824, Lamb sends the following well-known lines for Lucy Barton's album :

Little book, surnamed of *white*,
Clean as yet, and fair to sight,
Keep thy attribution right.

Never disproportion'd scrawl,
 Ugly blot (that's worse than all),
 On thy maiden clearness fall !

In each letter here design'd,
 Let the reader emblem'd find
 Neatness of the owner's mind.

Gilded margins count a sin ;
 Let thy leaves attraction win
 By the golden rules within ;
 Sayings fetch'd from sages old ;
 Saws which Holy Writ unfold,
 Worthy to be grayed in gold :

Lighter fancies not excluding ;
 Blameless wit, with nothing rude in,
 Sometimes mildly interluding

Amid strains of graver measure :
 Virtue's self hath oft her pleasure
 In sweet Muses' groves of leisure.

Riddles dark, perplexing sense ;
 Darker meanings of offence ;
 What but *shades*—be banished hence.

Whitest thoughts, in whitest dress,
 Candid meanings, best express
 Mind of quiet Quakeress.

The poem is accompanied by this letter :

Dear B.B.,—

'I am ill at these numbers;' but if the above be not too mean to have a place in thy daughter's sanctum, take them with pleasure. I assume that her name is Hannah, because it is a pretty Scriptural cognomen.

I began on another sheet of paper, and just as I had penned the second line of stanza two, an ugly blot fell, to illustrate my counsel. I am sadly given to blot, and modern

blotting-paper gives no redress ; it only smears, and makes it worse. The only remedy is scratching out, which gives it a clerkish look. The most innocent blots are made with red ink, and are rather ornamental. Marry, they are not always to be distinguished from the effusions of a cut finger. Well, I hope and trust thy tick-doleru, or however you spell it, is vanished, for I have frightful impressions of that tick, and do altogether hate it, as an unpaid score, or the tick of a death watch. I take it to be a species of Vitus's dance (I omit the sanctity, writing to 'one of the men called Friends'). I knew a young lady who could dance no other ; she danced it through life, and very queer and fantastic were her steps.

Heaven bless thee from such measures, and keep thee from the foul fiend, who delights to lead after false fires in the night. Flibbertigibbet, that gives the web and the pin, and I forget what else.

From my den, as Bunyan has it, 30th September, 1824.

C. L.

The letters to Bernard Barton are not conspicuous for drolleries, such as Lamb put into other communications to be found in Canon Ainger's volumes, but he did nothing better than the famous Fauntleroy warning, to omit which would be a sin unpardonable. The passage was written on the day following the execution of the defaulting banker, whose history need not be obtruded here.

And now, my dear sir, trifling apart, the gloomy catastrophe of yesterday morning prompts a sadder vein. The fate of the unfortunate Fauntleroy makes me, whether I will or no, to cast reflecting eyes around on such of my friends as, by a parity of situation, are exposed to a similarity of temptation. My very style seems to myself to become more impressive than usual, with the change of theme. Who that standeth,

knoweth but he may yet fall? Your hands, as yet, I am most willing to believe, have never deviated into other's property. You think it impossible that you could ever commit so heinous an offence; but so thought Fauntleroy once; so have thought many besides him, who at last have expiated as he hath done. You are as yet upright; but you are a banker, at least the next thing to it. I feel the delicacy of the subject; but cash must pass through your hands, sometimes to a great amount. If in an unguarded hour—but I will hope better. Consider the scandal it will bring upon those of your persuasion. Thousands would go to see a Quaker hanged that would be indifferent to the fate of a Presbyterian or an Anabaptist. Think of the effect it would have on the sale of your poems alone, not to mention higher considerations! I tremble, I am sure, at myself, when I think that so many poor victims of the law, at one time of their life, made as sure of never being hanged, as I in my presumption am too ready to do myself. What are we better than they? Do we come into the world with different necks? Is there any distinctive mark under our left ears? Are we unstrangulable, I ask you? Think of these things. I am shocked sometimes at the shape of my own fingers, not for their resemblance to the ape tribe (which is something), but for the exquisite adaptation of them to the purposes of picking, fingering, etc. No one that is so framed, I maintain it, but should tremble.

On April 6th, 1825, Lamb tells Mr. Barton of his emancipation from ledger, desk, and rule:

I am free, B.B.—free as air!

‘The little bird that wings the sky
Knows no such liberty.’

I was set free on Tuesday in last week at four o'clock. I came home for ever. . . . B.B., I would not serve another seven years for seven hundred thousand pounds! I have got £441 net for life, sanctioned by Act of Parliament, with a provision for Mary if she survives me. I will

live another fifty years ; or, if I live but ten, they will be thirty, reckoning the quantity of real time in them, *i.e.*, the time that is a man's own.

In August of the same year he has some sensible remarks on a certain kind of poetry :

I did not express myself clearly about what I think a false topic insisted on so frequently in consolatory addresses on the death of infants. I know something like it is in Scripture, but I think humanly spoken. It is a natural thought, a sweet fallacy to the survivors, but still a fallacy. If it stands on the doctrine of this being a probationary state, it is liable to this dilemma. Omniscience, to whom possibility must be clear as act, must know of the child, what it would hereafter turn out : if good, then the topic is false to say it is secured from falling into future wilfulness, vice, etc. ; if bad, I do not see how its exemption from certain future overt acts, by being snatched away, at all tells in its favour. You stop the arm of a murderer, or arrest the finger of a pick-purse ; but is not the guilt incurred as much by the intent as if never so much acted ? Why children are hurried off, and all reprobates of a hundred left, whose trial humanly we may think was complete at fifty, is among the obscurities of Providence. The very notion of a state of probation has darkness in it. The All-knower has no need of satisfying His eyes by seeing what we will do, when He knows before what we will do. Methinks we might be condemned before commission. In these things we grope and flounder, and if we can pick up a little human comfort that the child taken is snatched from vice (no great compliment to it, by-the-by), let us take it. And as to where an untried child goes, whether to join the assembly of its elders who have borne the heat of the day—fire-purified martyrs, and torment-sifted confessors—what know we ? We promise heaven, methinks, too cheaply, and assign large revenues to minors incompetent to manage them.

Epitaphs run upon this topic of consolation, till the very frequency induces a cheapness. Tickets for admission into Paradise are sculptured out at a penny a letter, twopence a syllable, etc. It is all a mystery ; and the more I try to express my meaning (having none that is clear), the more I flounder. Finally, write what your own conscience, which to you is the unerring judge, seems best, and be careless about the whimsies of such a half-baked notionist as I am.

In March, 1826, Lamb refers to the hap-hazard character of his writing material :—

You may know my letters by the paper and the folding. For the former, I live on scraps obtained in charity from an old friend, whose stationery is a permanent perquisite ; for folding, I shall do it neatly when I learn to tie my neck-cloths.

I surprise most of my friends by writing to them on ruled paper, as if I had not got past pot-hooks and hangers. Sealing-wax, I have none on my establishment ; wafers of the coarsest bran supply its place. When my epistles come to be weighed with Pliny's, however superior to the Roman in delicate irony, judicious reflections, etc. ; his gilt post will bribe over the judges to him. All the time I was at the E. I. H. I never mended a pen, I now cut 'em to the stumps, marring rather than mending the primitive goose-quill. I cannot bear to pay for articles I used to get for nothing. When Adam laid out his first penny upon non-pareils at some stall in Mesopotamos, I think it went hard with him, reflecting upon his old goodly orchard, where he had so many for nothing.

The letter finishes :—

We are about to sit down to roast beef, at which we could wish A. K. [Anne Knight], B.B., and B.B.'s pleasant daughter to be humble partakers. So much for my hint at visitors, which was scarcely calculated for droppers-in from Woodbridge ; the sky does not drop such larks every day.

On May 16th, Lamb complains of the treacherous weather :—

I have had my head and ears stuffed up with the East winds : a continual ringing in my brain of bells jangled, or the spheres touched by some raw angel. Is it not George the Third trying the Hundredth Psalm ? I get my music for nothing. But the weather seems to be softening, and will thaw my stunnings. Coleridge, writing to me a week or two since, begins his note—‘Summer has set in with its usual severity.’ A cold summer is all I know of disagreeable in cold. I do not mind the utmost rigour of real winter, but these smiling hypocrites of May’s wither me to death. My head has been a ringing chaos, like the day the winds were made, before they submitted to the discipline of a weathercock, before the quarters were made. In the street, with the blended noises of life about me, I hear, and my head is lightened ; but in a room the hubbub comes back, and I am deaf as a sinner. . . . I can hardly read a book, for I miss that small soft voice which the idea of articulated words raises (almost imperceptibly to you) in a silent reader. I seem too deaf to see what I read. But with a touch or two of returning zephyr my head will melt. What lies you poets tell about the May ! It is the most ungenial part of the year. Cold crocuses, cold primroses, you take your blossoms in ice—a painted sun.

‘Unmeaning joy around appears,
And Nature smiles as if she sneers.’

It is ill with me when I begin to look which way the wind sets. Ten years ago, I literally did not know the point from the broad end of the vane, which it was that indicated the quarter. I hope these ill winds have blown over you as they do through me.

Towards the end of the year 1826, Lamb begins a letter thus whimsically :

Dear B.B. (the *Busy Bee*, as Hood after Dr. Watts apostrophises thee, and well dost thou deserve it for thy labours in the Muses' gardens, wandering over parterres of 'Think-on-mes and Forget-me-nots, to a total impossibility of forgetting thee), thy letter was acceptable, thy scruples may be dismissed, thou art *rectus in curiâ*, not a word more to be said, *verbum sapienti*, and so forth, the matter is decided with a white stone, classically, mark me, and the apparitions vanish'd which haunted me, only the cramp, Caliban's distemper, clawing me in the calvish part of my nature, makes me ever and anon roar bullishly, squeak cowardishly, and limp cripple-ishly. Do I write Quakerly and simply, 'tis my most Master Mathews' like intention to do it.

In the body of the note is this sentence: "Old Christmas is a-coming, to the confusion of Puritans, Muggletonians, Anabaptists, Quakers, and that unwassailing crew." Christmas came and went, and in the early summer of 1827, Lamb sent to B.B. a coloured print of a little boy learning to read at his mother's knee. To give completeness to the present Lamb found an old frame for it, and an uproarious evening was spent by himself and Hood in fashioning a respectable picture. The frame being too large, it was necessary to cover part of the glass with an opaque coat. When the botchers had finished, Hood said that "Barton would be sure to like it, because it was *broad-brimmed*." In the original verses which accompanied the gift the last line contained this jest:

And broad-brimmed, as the Owner's Calling,
but Lamb afterwards apologised for the dis-

respectful nature of the phrase, and "sober" was put in its stead. These are the lines :

When last you left your Woodbridge pretty,
To stare at sights, and see the City,
If I your meaning understood,
You wished a Picture, cheap but good ;
The colouring ? decent ; clear, not muddy ;
To suit a Poet's quiet study,
Where Books and Prints for delectation
Hang, rather than vain ostentation.
The subject ? what I pleased, if comely ;
But something scriptural and homely :
A sober Piece, not gay or wanton,
For winter firesides to descant on ;
The theme so scrupulously handled,
A Quaker might look on unscandal'd ;
Such as might satisfy Ann Knight,
And classic Mitford just not fright.
Just such a one I've found, and send it ;
If liked, I give—if not, but lend it.
The moral ? nothing can be sounder.
The fable ? 'tis its own expounder—
A Mother teaching to her Chit
Some good book, and explaining it.
He, silly urchin, tired of lesson,
His learning lays no mighty stress on,
But seems to hear not what he hears ;
Thrusting his fingers in his ears,
Like Obstinate, that perverse funny one,
In honest parable of Bunyan.
His working Sister, more sedate
Listens ; but in a kind of state
The painter meant for steadiness,
But has a tinge of sullenness ;
And, at first sight, she seems to brook
As ill her needle, as he his book.

This is the Picture. For the Frame—
’Tis not ill suited to the same ;
Oak-carved, not gilt, for fear of falling ;
Old-fashion’d ; plain, yet not appalling ;
And sober, as the Owner’s Calling.

B.B. replied with the following poem
(published in *New Year’s Eve*, 1828), entitled
“ Fireside Quatrains to Charles Lamb ” :

It is a mild and lovely winter night,
The breeze without is scarcely heard to sigh ;
The crescent moon and stars of twinkling light
Are shining calmly in a cloudless sky.

Within the fire burns clearly : in its rays
My old oak book-case wears a cheerful smile ;
Its antique mouldings brighten’d by the blaze
Might vie with any of more modern style.

That rural sketch—that scene in Norway’s land
Of rocks and pine trees by the torrent’s foam—
That landscapetraced by Gainsborough’s youthful hand,
Which shows how lovely is a peasant’s home—

That Virgin and her Child, with those sweet boys—
All of the fire-light own the genial gleam ;
And lovelier far than in day’s light and noise
At this still hour to me their beauties seem.

One picture more there is, which should not be
Unhonoured or unsung, because it bears
In many a lonely hour my thoughts to thee,
Heightening to fancy every charm it wears—

A quaint familiar group—a mother mild
And young and fair, who fain would teach to read
That urchin, by her patience unbeguiled,
The volume open on her lap to heed.

With fingers thrust into his ears he looks
 As much he wished the weary task were done ;
 And more, far more, of pastime than of books
 Lurks in that arch, dark eye so full of fun.

Graver, or in the pouts (I know not well
 Which of the twain), his elder sister plies
 Her needle so that it is hard to tell
 What the full meaning of her downcast eyes.

Dear Charles, if thou shouldst haply chance to know
 Where such a picture hung in days of yore,
 Its highest worth, its deepest charm, to show
 I need not tax my rhymes or fancy more.

It is not womanhood in all its grace,
 And lovely childhood plead to me alone ;
 Though these each stranger still delights to trace,
 And with congratulating smile to own ;

No—with all these my feelings fondly blend
 A hidden charm unborrowed from the eye ;
 That wakes the memory of my absent friend,
 And chronicles the pleasant hours gone by.

On August 10th, 1827, we have this passage :

You have well described your old-fashioned grand paternal hall.¹ Is it not odd that every one's earliest recollections are of some such place ! I had my Blakesware (Blakesmoor in the London). Nothing fills a child's mind like a large old mansion ; better if un—or partially—occupied ; peopled with the spirits of deceased members of the county and Justices of the Quorum. Would I were buried in the peopled solitude of one, with my feelings at

1. This reference seems to be to some such description of the Tottenham house as that printed on p. 23.

seven years old! Those marble busts of the Emperors, they seemed as if they were to stand for ever, as they had stood from the living days of Rome, in that old marble hall, and I to partake of their permanency. Eternity was, while I thought not of Time. But he thought of me, and they are toppled down, and corn covers the spot of the noble old dwelling and its princely gardens. I feel like a grasshopper that, chirping about the grounds, escaped his scythe only by my littleness. Even now he is whetting one of his smallest razors to clean wipe me out, perhaps. Well!

From this point the correspondence loses in interest. Mary Lamb is becoming more and more the victim of her sad complaint, and her brother's spirits, though occasionally whipped up into exuberance, are giving signs of the strain put upon them. A man cannot devote a lifetime's deeds and thoughts to the ceaseless care of a diseased mind, a man cannot renounce the joys of wife and children, and show no scar. In thinking of the quiet, uncomplaining heroism of Charles Lamb, we are reminded of his words about the early Quakers: "You have no martyrs *quite to the fire*, I think, among you; but plenty of . . . spirit-martyrs."

The remaining letters that are preserved have little of the intimate nature of those that precede. But the frolic Lamb skips in now and then. In August, 1827, he writes—

Your taste, I see, is less simple than mine, which the difference of our persuasions has doubtless effected. In fact, of late you have so Frenchified your style, larding it with *hors de combats* and *au desespoirs*, that o' my conscience the Foxian blood is quite dried out of you, and the skipping Monsieur spirit has been infused. Doth Lucy go to balls?

I must remodel my lines, which I wrote for her. I hope A. K. keeps to her primitives.

At the end of the letter he asks—

Do you never Londonise again? I should like to talk over old poetry with you of which I have much, and you, I think, little. Do your Drummonds [the Alexanders] allow no holidays? I would willingly come and work for you a three weeks or so, to let you loose. Would I could sell or give you some of my leisure! Positively, the best thing a man can have to do is nothing, and next to that perhaps—good works.

In December of the same year, Lamb sends an Annual containing “Lucy’s verses.” He attacks the Album with much vigour: “If I go to —— thou art there also, O all-pervading Album! All over the Leeward Islands, in Newfoundland, and the Back Settlements, I understand there is no other reading. They haunt me. I die of Albophobia!”

The next letter is critical of Bernard Barton’s volume, *A Widow’s Tale* (1827): “Certes, friend B., thy Widow’s Tale is too horrible, spite of the lenitives of Religion, to embody in verse. I hold prose to be the appropriate exposition of such atrocities! No offence, but it is a cordial that makes the heart sick.” He adds, roguishly, “By the by, is the widow likely to marry again?”

On December 5th, 1828, Lamb acknowledges the receipt of B.B.’s new volume, *A New Year’s Eve*, which was dedicated to Charles Richard Sumner, Bishop of Winchester. He says:—

It does me good to see the Dedication to a Christian Bishop. I am for a comprehension, as divines call it ; but so as that the Church shall go a good deal more than half way over to the silent Meeting-house. I have ever said that the Quakers are the only *professors* of Christianity as I read it in the Evangiles."

Then comes a piece of Lamb's mischief :—

I say *professors* : marry, as to practice, with their gaudy hot types and poetical vanities, they are much at one with the sinful."

On March 25th, 1829, he writes :—

I have just come from town, where I have been to get my bit of quarterly pension ; and have brought home, from stalls in Barbican, the old 'Pilgrim's Progress' with the prints—Vanity Fair, etc.—now scarce. Four shillings. Cheap. And also one of whom I have oft heard and had dreams, but never saw in the flesh—that is in sheepskin—
'The whole theologic works of

THOMAS AQUINAS.'

My arms ached with lugging it a mile to the stage ; but the burden was a pleasure, such as old Anchises was to the shoulders of Æneas, or the Lady to the Lover in old romance, who having to carry her to the top of a high mountain (the price of obtaining her), clambered with her to the top, and fell dead with fatigue.

'Oh the glorious old Schoolmen !'

There must be something in him. Such great names imply greatness. Who hath seen Michael Angelo's things—of us that never pilgrimaged to Rome—and yet which of us disbelieves his greatness? How I will revel in his cobwebs and subtleties, till my brain spins !

On July 3rd, 1829, Lamb writes : "I am very much grieved indeed for the indisposition

of poor Lucy. . . . My sister is again taken ill, and I am obliged to remove her out of the house for many weeks, I fear, before I can hope to have her again. I have been very desolate indeed."

Three weeks later comes this jocular preface to a sad epistle.

Enfield Chase Side, Saturday,

25th of July, A.D. 1829, 11 a.m.

There!—a fuller, plumper, juicier date never dropt from Idumean palm. Am I in the *date*-ive case now? If not, a fig for dates, which is more than a date is worth. I never stood much affected to these liminary specialities; least of all, since the date of my superannuation.

'What have I with time to do?

Slaves of desks, 'twas meant for you.'

The letter follows :

Your handwriting has conveyed much pleasure to me in report of Lucy's restoration. Would I could send you as good news of my poor Lucy. But some wearisome weeks I must remain lonely yet. I have had the loneliest time, near ten weeks, broken by a short apparition of Emma for her holidays, whose departure only deepened the returning solitude, and by ten days I have past in town. But town, with all my native hankering after it, is not what it was. The streets, the shops are left; but all old friends are gone! And in London I was frightfully convinced of this as I passed houses and places, empty caskets now. I have ceased to care almost about anybody. The bodies I cared for are in graves, or dispersed. My old clubs, that lived so long and flourished so steadily, are crumbled away. When I took leave of our adopted young friend at Charing Cross, 'twas heavy unfeeling rain, and I had nowhere to go.

Home have I none, and not a sympathising house to turn to in the great city. Never did the waters of heaven pour down

on a forlorn head. Yet I tried ten days at a sort of friend's house, but it was large and straggling,—one of the individuals of my old long knot of friends, card-players, pleasant companions, that have tumbled to pieces, into dust and other things ; and I got home on Thursday, convinced that I was better to get home to my hole at Enfield, and hide like a sick cat in my corner. Less than a month I hope will bring home Mary. She is at Fulham, looking better in her health than ever, but sadly rambling, and scarce showing any pleasure in seeing me, or curiosity when I should come again. But the old feelings will come back again, and we shall drown old sorrows over a game of picquet again. But 'tis a tedious cut out of a life of 64, to lose 12 or 13 weeks every year or two. And to make me more alone, our ill-tempered maid is gone, who, with all her airs, was yet a home piece of furniture, a record of better days. The young thing that has succeeded her is good and attentive, but she is nothing. And I have no one here to talk over old matters with. Scolding and quarrelling have something of familiarity, and a community of interest ; they imply acquaintance ; they are of resentment, which is of the family of dear-ness. . . .

Could you not write something on Quakerism, for Quakers to read, but nominally addressed to Non-Quakers, explaining your dogmas—waiting on the Spirit—by the analogy of human calmness and patient waiting on the judgment ? I scarcely know what I mean, but to make Non-Quakers reconciled to your doctrines, by showing something like them in mere human operations ; but I hardly understand myself ; so let it pass for nothing. I pity you for overwork ; but I assure you, no work is worse. The mind preys on itself, the most unwholesome food. I bragged formerly that I could not have too much time. I have a surfeit. With few years to come, the days are wearisome. But weariness is not eternal. Something will shine out to take the load off that flags me, which is at present intolerable. I have killed an hour or two in this poor scrawl. I am a

sanguinary murderer of time, and would kill him inch-meal just now. But the snake is vital. Well: I shall write merrier anon. 'Tis the present copy of my countenance I send, and to complain is a little to alleviate. May you enjoy yourself as far as the wicked wood will let you, and think that you are not quite alone as I am!

The next letter (December 8th, 1829) is brighter. "I have the satisfaction to tell you," he says, "that we are both in better health and spirits than we have been for a year or two past." The cause, he adds, is partly due to the loss of responsibility, as he and his sister have left their house and are boarding at Enfield. He goes on—

We should have done so before, but it is not easy to flesh and blood to give up an ancient establishment, to discard old Penates, and from house-keepers to turn house-sharers. (N.B.—We are not in the workhouse.) Diocletian, in his garden, found more repose than on the imperial seat of Rome; and the nob of Charles the Fifth ached seldomer under a monk's cowl than under the diadem.

In a note dated February 25th, 1830, Lamb writes—

The more my character comes to be known, the less my veracity will come to be suspected. Time every day clears up some suspected narrative of Herodotus, Bruce, and others of us great travellers. . . . A careful observer of life, Bernard, has no need to invent. Nature romances it for him.

On August 30th, 1830, he has this profoundly sad sentence: "What a beautiful Autumn morning this is, if it was but with me as in times past when the candle of the

Lord shined round me!" The last letter of the correspondence bears the date April 30th, 1831, and is in Latin. This is a portion :

Ænigma mihi hoc solvas [says he], *et Ædipus fies. Quâ ratione assimulandus sit equus TREMULO? Quippe cui tota communicatio sit per HAY et NEIGH, juxta consilium illud Dominicum, 'Fiat omnis communicatio vestra YEA et NAY.'*

Canon Ainger translates :

Solve me this riddle, and you will be an Ædipus. Why is a horse like a Quaker? Because his whole communication is by "Hay" and "Neigh," in accordance with the Scriptural injunction ('Yea and Nay').

Three-and-a-half years later, Charles Lamb died at the age of fifty-nine. A few days afterwards Bernard Barton despatched the appended letter to a London bookseller.

WOODBIDGE, *Jan.* 4, 1835.

Dear Keymer,

Thy account of poor Lamb's death, though it did not take me by surprise, for I saw it in *The Times* the day before, could not but deeply interest and painfully affect me. I had given him up as a correspondent, after, I think, three unanswered letters, from a feeling that the reluctance he had often expressed to letter-writing was so increased by indulgence, any further efforts to force him into Epistolizing would only give him pain, without being very likely to obtain any rejoinder; or were such extorted, it would be compulsory instead of *con amore*,—so I had given up all hope of hearing from him. Then came thy message, through Miss C., which induced me to make one more trial. Yet I am glad I did make it, for although the notion may be an altogether erroneous one, I cheat myself with the thought I might perhaps be his last correspondent, if

indeed he ever chanced to open my letter, which perhaps he might. If thou can'st give me any further account of his last few days, pray do ! for I should like to hear all I can of him. Was he at all aware, ere his close, that it was drawing nigh ? I should like to know how such a man would meet death. With all his wit and humour, unrivalled as it was, he was too good, I would hope too rich in right feeling, to die jesting, as Hume did. Often as his sportive sallies seemed to border on what appeared irreverent, and to some rigid people the verge of profanity, I am disposed to acquit him of all intentional offence of that kind. He was not heartless, however his playful imagination might betray him into frequent improprieties of expression. His vast and desultory reading, his constitutional temperament, his habits of life, his eccentricities of manner, all combined to render him the very sort of character likely to be completely misunderstood by superficial observers. A cold philosophical sceptic might have set him down as a crack-brained enthusiast ; while with a high-flown, formal professor of Orthodoxy, he would have passed for an infidel and a scorner. I believe him to have been as remote from the one as from the other. But to pourtray such a character were a hopeless effort ; Hazlitt, in one of his better moods could perhaps have done it as well as anyone ; or Leigh Hunt, if he could lay aside his jennery-jessamy prettinesses of style and mannerism. Perhaps Lamb's own account of himself, as given in the prefatory paper to the *Last Essays of Elia*, is the best sketch of him we ever shall have. I should like a copy of his tribute to Coleridge, and pray tell me anything in thy power about him—his close, and poor Mary, for I feel not a little interested in knowing what is to be done with and for her. At some time or other I hope to string my own thoughts of Lamb in verse, but I have no ability even to think of attempting it now. I can only now think and feel that I have lost him.

CHAPTER VII.

MORE FRIENDS.

‘Another, and another, still succeeds !’
 And one by one are from us called away,
 Friends—valued, loved, and cherish’d many a day,
 For noble thoughts and honourable deeds.
 Yet reckon not that we have leant on reeds,
 Which broke to pierce us, when, without dismay,
 In such we have reposed that trust and stay
 For which, e’en from the grave, their virtue pleads.
 The loved are not the lost ! though gone before ;
 To live in others’ hearts is not to die !
 Worth thus embalm’d by faithful memory,
 As dead—it were ungrateful to deplore ;
 Having outlived the grave is one proof more
 That it was born for immortality !

Sonnet on the Death of a Friend.

AMONG Bernard Barton’s friends was a
 Quaker lady whom he never saw, Mrs.
 Mary Sutton, of Cumberland, to whose thought-
 ful kindness he was indebted for the portrait of
 his father. The following beautiful sonnet was
 addressed to Mrs. Sutton :

Unknown to sight—for more than twenty years
Have we, by written interchange of thought,
And feeling, been into communion brought
Which friend to friend insensibly endears !
In various joys and sorrows, hopes and fears,
Befalling each ; and serious subjects, fraught
With wider interest, we at times have sought
To gladden *this*—yet look to *brighter* spheres !
We never yet have met, and never may,
Perchance, while pilgrims upon earth we fare ;
Yet, as we seek each other's load to bear,
Or lighten, and that law of love obey,
May we not hope, in heaven's eternal day,
To meet, and happier intercourse to share ?

The correspondence touches religious matters principally, although now and then B.B. is put upon his defence, in a way that sounds amusingly to modern ears, for some action which Mrs. Sutton, a stricter adherent to the letter than himself, considers likely to tend to laxity. Thus on one occasion she gently suggests that the prefix " Mr." is a vanity, and that the pattern of B.B.'s waistcoat, worked for him by his daughter, is hardly as sober as George Fox would have liked ; to which re-proofs the poet first pleads guilty, and then proceeds humorously to divest himself of blame. Now and then the vindication is more serious in tone, as when B.B. justifies his love of pictures :

Thy objections to hanging up such things may be as much a matter of conscience with thee as the use of them is with me the result of considerable thought. . . . My limited leisure and my failing bodily strength do not

allow of my being the pedestrian I once was. I often do not walk out of the streets for weeks together ; but my love of nature, of earth, and sky, and water ; of trees, fields, and lanes ; and my still deeper love of the human face divine, is as intense as ever. As a poet, the use of these is as needful to me as my food. I can seldom get out to see the actual and the real ; but a vivid transcript of these, combined with some little effort of memory and fancy, makes my little study full of life, peoples its silent walls with nature's cherished charms, and lights up human faces round me—dumb, yet eloquent in their human semblance.

He once even ventures to present his censor with a pictorial vanity :—

I am about to try thy faith, love, and charity to an hair's breadth, by sending thee a little print of the interior of my study with its pictures on the walls, and — its crucifix on the mantel-piece . . . and there is a figure in it meant to indicate me ; but about as much like Robinson Crusoe, as it is like me.

The crucifix seems to need some justification, for he continues :

But the crucifix—well, my dear friend, the crucifix— . . . It was brought from Germany, I think, by a friend of mine, and placed where it now stands, by his wife (a true Protestant,) in my absence, the day before they left Woodbridge, as a parting memorial ; and I have simply allowed it to stand there ever since, now, I think, three years ! It has called forth, frequently, a kind thought of the giver ; now and then I hope not an unkind one of our erring fellow Christians who mistake the use of such emblems ; and if it have occasionally reminded me of the one great propitiatory sacrifice for sin and transgression—that I hope is a thought to be reverently cherished, even if suggested by what some may superstitiously regard.

Such, my dear friend, is the history of my little crucifix. Fare thee well, and try to think of it and me with charity.

It is in his communications to Mrs. Sutton that we find the poet's most definite prose utterances on Quakerism. He gives his opinion on such questions as birthright membership, secession, and certain internal strife from which the Society of Friends suffered in the forties. The time to quote these passages has passed, but such an avowal as that which now follows is in no way out of place at the present day :

It has long been my belief and conviction that the principles of Friends, rightly understood, form the most pure, most simple, and most spiritual code of faith and doctrine which the Christian world exhibits; and, under this belief, I can entertain no fear of the decline or overthrow of them.

Again, he says, also to Mrs. Sutton—

All that I have heard, seen, or read, only strengthens my attachment to old-fashioned Quakerism. I do not mean that in every iota of manners, habits, and practice, we are bound to follow the example of those who lived more than a century and a half ago, when the Society was in a very different state. But in all essential points of faith and doctrine I am more and more convinced those old worthies were substantially sound.

Writing in 1843, on kindred matters, to Mrs. Shawe, he makes a characteristic confession, in which we may perhaps learn the secret of the

exclusion from the "Annual Monitor" of any record of Bernard Barton's sweetly-wholesome life :

The longer I live the more I love and prize Quaker principles. But I am well content to love them without compassing sea and land to make proselytes to them, and would rather be thought in error for holding them, even by those whom I most esteem, than risk any infringement of that perfect law of love which is the essence and substance of religion itself, by disputing about them.

This Mrs. Shawe was the wife of Robert Newton Shawe, of Kesgrave Hall, Woodbridge, a Suffolk magistrate, and at one time a candidate for Parliament. The election went against him, and his defeat drew the following sonnet from B.B., addressed to Mrs. Shawe :

Lady, I send this tributary strain
Not to condole, but to congratulate :
I would not so insult thy noble mate
As to suppose defeat could give him pain.
Not worthless was the struggle, though in vain,
Which leaves the vanquish'd victor over fate,
Upbearing still with head and heart elate,
And with a conscience wholly free from stain.
The world may shout upon the winning side,
Yet he who loses not his self-control,
But stands erect with independent soul,
Though foil'd has still a better source of pride ;
And may be *envied*—seated by thy side,
First in thy heart, though last upon the poll.

Mr. and Mrs. Shawe were among the most valued of Bernard Barton's friends ; it was

to them that the volume of selections from his letters and poems was dedicated by his daughter.

Mr. Barton did not often enlarge upon his religious beliefs in his correspondence, but one of the clearest and most concise expositions of Quakerism that exists, is contained in a letter written by the poet to John Linnell in 1830. That fine painter and stern individualist had leanings towards the simple form of worship practised by the Society of Friends, and, although a stranger, he wrote to Mr. Barton, asking for some account of the sect and its beliefs, and for information whether it was admissible and compatible for a Quaker to carry on the profession of artist. B.B.'s summary of Quaker doctrine must be sought in Mr. Story's *Life of John Linnell*,¹ but here are his remarks upon the relations of Quakerism and Art :

So far as my own taste, feeling, and judgment are competent to decide the point, I see no irreconcilable hostility between the religious principles of Friends and the indulgence of a taste for painting. But I am quite aware that a Quaker painter would be a still greater novelty than a Quaker poet, and am almost inclined to doubt whether the former would not have a still more difficult and delicate task to perform than the latter if he hoped to be regarded by the Body as orthodox and consistent. Abstractedly there can be no necessary hostility between Quakerism and painting, because I know of no good reason why it should be more unquakerly to draw or paint a beautiful landscape than to build a fine house or lay out and embellish its grounds. But

1 Published by Messrs. Bentley and Son.

it is easy to theorise on elementary principles, which, when put in practice, involve much difficulty and perplexity. My own nutshell of a house is as full of prints and pictures as I can well hang it; but my indulgence in this respect is at variance with general practice amongst us, and would be regarded, I doubt not, as a species of laxity and latitudinarianism by many excellent and worthy members of our Society.

The correspondence between the two men was not extensive, and at other times touched only matters of art. This extract from a letter dated April 22, 1830, contains discriminative criticism of William Blake, whose designs for the Book of Job had been lent to the poet by Mr. Linnell, and gives an idea of the range of B.B.'s sympathies:

There is a dryness and hardness in Blake's manner of engraving which is very apt to be repulsive to print-collectors in general—to any, indeed, who have not taste enough to appreciate the force and originality of his conceptions, in spite of the manner in which he has embodied them. I candidly own I am not surprised at this; his style is little calculated to take with the admirers of modern engraving. It puts me in mind of some old prints I have seen, and seems to combine somewhat of old Albert Dürer with Bolswert. I cannot but wish he could have clothed his imaginative creations in a garb more attractive to ordinary mortals, or else given simple outlines of them. The extreme beauty, elegance, and grace of several of his marginal accompaniments induce me to think that they would have pleased more generally in that state. But his was not a mind to dictate to; and what he has done is quite enough to stamp him as a genius of the highest order. A still prouder and more enduring meed of praise is due to the excellence and sterling

worth of the man ; his child-like simplicity, his manly independence, his noble aspirations after the purest and loftiest of all fame, appear to me to form a singular union of those virtues which distinguished the better citizens of Greece and Rome with the milder graces which adorned the primitive Apostles.

In June of the same year Mr. Linnell presented to the poet a pastoral etching by his own hand, and one of Blake's illustrations to Dante ; and eight years later, in 1838, we find B.B. thanking the painter for a copy of Blake's *Book of Job*, and an engraving by the donor. He says :—

I wish I were a man of more leisure, for if I were I should gladly run up to town for the sake of giving thee a look, and having some talks about Blake—to say nothing of the delight I should feel in seeing some of his extraordinary drawings. Were I a rich man, I can scarce tell what I would not give to be the possessor of one of his imaginary portraits—I mean one of those drawn from a supposed sitter, famous in the olden time, I forget whether he ever drew Guy Fawkes ; he would have been a good subject for him.

Mr. Barton goes on to say that he has recently seen

the drawing of Cowper by Romney, done when he was Hayley's guest at Earham. 'Tis in crayons—rough, careless, and unfinished—but such a portrait! . . . It is a tremendous portrait, not to be looked at without mingled pity and terror ; it haunted me for days after. Such a picture will hardly be ever taken again, unless a mad painter should again have a mad poet for his sitter. Yet, painfully powerful as it is, it has no disgusting extravagance ;

it is a fearful and vivid reality ; but though, in your admiration of it, a mournful feeling is the predominant one, you can't take your eyes from it, nor do you wish it ; it touches a chord of sympathy, in the indulgence of which you find a mournful pleasure which neutralises the pain it would otherwise inflict.

In 1838, Mr. Barton addressed a sonnet to "Mr. Linnell, of Bayswater," full of praise for his kindness to William Blake ; and then the intercourse between painter and poet seems to have ceased.

Allan Cunningham, the writer of breezy songs and the biographer of British painters, was known and loved by the Quaker Poet. We find a reference to him in one of B.B.'s letters to Mr. Clemesha, a gentleman who travelled unceasingly about the country, with whom Mr. Barton carried on what he called a Bo-peep correspondence : "When I say 'Peep' at one place," he writes, "thy 'Bo' comes from another." This particular letter, written in 1843, lets in a bright light on the less prominent B.B., and illustrates his fondness for humours, and capacity for passive enjoyment :—

I never fancy to myself that much, if aught, of *personal* identity can hang about folks in London ; that they can see, hear, smell, or think, talk, and feel, as people do in the country. I can obscurely understand how Cockneys born and bred, or such as are even long resident in Cockaigne, and therefore native to that strange element, may in course of time acquire a sort of borrowed nature, and by virtue of it, a kind of artificial individuality ; but I never was in London long enough to get at this, and have always seemed, when there, *not to be myself*, but very much as if I were

walking in a dream, or like a bit of seaweed blown off some cliff or beach, and drifting with the current—one knew not why or how. In a coffee-room, up one of those queer long dark inn yards, I have felt more like myself;—there is more of quiet; folks often sit in boxes apart, and talk in a kind of under-tone; or when they do not, the united effect of so many voices becomes a sort of indistinct hum or buzz, relieved at intervals by the swinging to and fro of the coffee-room door, the clatter of plates, the jingle of glasses, or the rustle of the newspaper often turned over. I have spent an hour or two after my fashion in this way, at the Four Swans, Belle Sauvage, Bolt in Tun, Spread Eagle, and other coach houses, by no means unpleasantly, seemingly reading the paper, and sipping my tea or coffee, wine or toddy, but really catching some amusing scraps of the talk going on round, and speculating on the characters of the talkers.

And here we come to Allan Cunningham—

But the greatest luxury London had to give, is gone with my poor old friend Allan Cunningham. It was worth something to steal out of the din and hubbub of crowded streets into those large, still, cathedral-like rooms of Chantrey's, populous with phantom-like statues, or groups of statues as large or larger than life; some tinted with dust and time, others of spectral whiteness, but all silent and solemn; to roam about among these, hearing nothing but the distant murmur of rolling carriages, now and then the clink of the workman's chisel in some of the yards or workshops, but chiefly the low, deliberate, often amusing, and always interesting talk of honest Allan, in broad Scotch. A morning of this sort was well worth going up to London on purpose for.¹

This is one of "honest Allan's" invitations, dated June 3rd, 1841—

¹ Allan Cunningham was Chantrey's "factor."

Come, my dear Friend, and see me on Friday, and bring Miss Barton and Major Moor with you ; you will find the doors of the sculptor open, and Allan Cunningham ready to welcome you. The evils of Life, and to me they have been and continue heavy, interpose both in matters of friendship and correspondence ; yet they have not altered my nature nor hardened my heart ; tho' they have bleached my locks and made me, since a severe illness which I had last year, reluctant to move. So come and see me, and let us 'give one hour's discharge to care.'

God bless you, says Allan Cunningham.

Writing for the last time to B.B. on October 27th, 1842, in answer to a request for his portrait, Allan Cunningham says—

As for my own head prefixed by Virtue to his edition [of Burns, which A. C. edited], I hope to be able to give you a far superior one to that ere long : it is harsh and hard, and—

'One would not look quite frightful when one's dead'

when in the company of a worthy man and a poet like thyself. Only see what a sad hand I write ! God bless you.

In less than a week Allan Cunningham was no more.

Let us round off the present chapter with a description by Mr. Barton of an old friend of humbler attainments—Thomas Hurd, of Seckford Hall. The following sympathetic account of this worthy is another example of the poet's easy and perspicuous prose. Thomas Hurd was, says B.B., writing in 1847,

a hearty old yeoman of about eighty-six—had occupied the farm in which he lived and died about fifty-five years. Social, hospitable, friendly ; a liberal master to his labourers,

a kind neighbour, and a right merry companion 'within the limits of becoming mirth.' In politics, a staunch Whig ; in his theological creed, as sturdy a Dissenter ; yet with no more party spirit in him than a child. He and I belonged to the same book club for about forty years. He entered it about fifteen years before I came into these parts, and was really a pillar in our literary temple. Not that he greatly cared about books, or was deeply read in them, but he loved to meet his neighbours, and get them round him, on any occasion, or no occasion at all. As a fine specimen of the true English yeoman, I have met few to equal, hardly any to surpass him, and he looked the character as well as he acted it, till within a very few years, when the strong man was bowed by bodily infirmity. About twenty-six years ago, in his dress costume of a blue coat and yellow buckskins, a finer sample of John Bullism you would rarely see. It was the whole study of his long life to make the few who revolved round him in his little orbit, as happy as he always seemed to be himself ; yet I was gravely queried with, when I happened to say that his children had asked me to write a few lines to his memory, whether I could do this in keeping with the general tone of my poetry. The speaker doubted if he was a decidedly pious character. He had at times, in his altitudes, been known to vociferate at the top of his voice, a song of which the chorus was certainly not teetotalish—

‘Sing old Rose and burn the bellows,
Drink and drive dull care away.’

I would not deny the vocal impeachment, for I had heard him sing the song myself. . . . As for his being or not being a decidedly pious character, that depended partly on who might be called on to decide the question. . . . Take the good old man for all in all, I look not to see his like again, for the breed is going out, I fear. His fine spirit of humanity was better, methinks, than much of that which apes the tone and assumes the form of divinity.

The Tudor mansion Seckford Hall, the home of Thomas Hurd, is only a mile or so out of Woodbridge, situated in one of those insanitary hollows so dear to our forefathers. The builder and original owner, it may be interesting to note here, was the Thomas Seckford whose munificence has done so much, and continues to do so much, for the poor of Woodbridge. The Hospital endowed by him for aged widowers and bachelors, which is hardly less comfortable than its kindred haven the Charterhouse, relieves the breadwinners of the Suffolk town of half the terrors of lonely eld; and the good people of Woodbridge have many another cause to be glad that Thomas Seckford saw fit to settle where he did. Seckford Hall is now fallen into decay, only a few rooms being used by the resident farmer, but enough of the house remains to enable the feeblest imagination to recover some of the glories of its hospitable past.

CHAPTER VIII.

EDWARD FITZGERALD.

Thou windest not through scenery which enchants
The gazer's eye with much of grand or fair ;
Yet on thy margin many a wandering pair
Have found that peaceful pleasure Nature grants
To those who seek her in her humbler haunts,
And love and prize them, because she is there.

Sonnet to the Deben.

EDWARD FITZGERALD, the author of the English version of the *Rubáiyát* of Omar Khayyám, was born at Bredfield House, near Woodbridge, in 1809. After spending some years of childhood in France, he was sent to Bury St. Edmund's school, where W. B. Donne, of whom we shall anon hear more, and James Spedding, the Baconian scholar, were among his companions. In 1826, he entered at Trinity College, Cambridge, there becoming the fast friend of Thackeray, W. H. Thompson, afterwards Master of Trinity, and John Allen,

afterwards Archdeacon of Salop. The friendship of these men, together with that of Alfred and Frederic Tennyson and the Rev. George Crabbe, grandson of his favourite poet, he retained until death snapped the bonds : fidelity to his chosen intimates being one of his strongest characteristics. Mr. FitzGerald took his degree and left college in 1830, thereafter assuming the habit of the scholarly country gentleman. Having comfortable means, reinforced by that rare wisdom which teaches that enough is sufficient, he adopted no profession, but gave his time to study and contemplation, living a life of stoical simplicity. At the time of his acquaintance with Bernard Barton, he dwelt in a little cottage at Boulge, a mile from Woodbridge, on the edge of his father's park, with no companions save a parrot and a Skye terrier. Those domestic duties to which he did not himself attend were performed by an old-fashioned Suffolk woman. In one of his letters to Mr. Barton he says—

I believe I should like to live in a small house just outside a pleasant English town all the days of my life, making myself useful in a humble way, reading my books, and playing a rubber of whist at night. But England cannot expect long such a reign of inward quiet as to suffer men to dwell so easily to themselves.

Howbeit Edward FitzGerald came very near the realisation of this ideal.

“He had,” writes his friend Mr. Aldis Wright, “no liking for the conventional usages of society, and was therefore somewhat

of a recluse. But he was by no means unsocial, and to those whom he admitted to his intimacy he was the most delightful of companions. His habits were extremely simple ; his charity large and generous, but always discriminating ; his nature tender and affectionate."¹

Mr. FitzGerald was never so happy as when strolling lazily about the lanes and byways of his native county, exchanging jests with his rustic acquaintances, or listening to some quaint tale. It is certain that no man could ever have more completely won the love and respect of his humble neighbours, and many are the stories of his kindly deeds and words. Suffolk people and Suffolk scenery were as dear to him as a mother is dear to her child ; and, thoroughly as he enjoyed his yearly sojourn in London with his friends, he ever left the country with pangs of regret. In his letters written to B.B. from the city, he now and again tells of hearing the invitation to the open-air. Thus in April, 1844 :

A cloud comes over Charlotte Street [where he was then lodging] and seems as if it were sailing softly on the April wind to fall in a blessed shower upon the lilac buds and thirsty anemones somewhere in Essex ; or, who knows ? perhaps at Boulge. Out will run Mrs. Faiers [his house-keeper], and with red arms and face of woe haul in the struggling windows of the cottage, and make all tight. Beauty Bob [his parrot] will cast a bird's eye out at the shower, and bless the useful wet. Mr. Loder [the Wood-

1 From *The Dictionary of National Biography*.

bridge bookseller] will observe to the farmer for whom he is doing up a dozen of Queen's Heads that it will be of great use : and the farmer will agree that his young barleys wanted it much. The German Ocean will dimple with innumerable pin points, and porpoises rolling near the surface sneeze with unusual pellets of fresh water—

‘ Can such things be,
And overcome us like a summer cloud,
Without our special wonder ? ’

Again :

Oh, Barton man ! but I am grilled here. Oh for to sit upon the banks of the dear old Deben with the worthy collier sloop going forth into the wide world as the sun sinks ! I went all over Westminster Abbey yesterday with a party of country folks, to see the tombs. I did this to vindicate my way of life.

And again :

I have cold, headache, and London disgust. Oh that I could look on my anemones ! and hear the sighing of my Scotch firs.

One more plaint :

I was at a party of modern wits last night that made me creep into myself, and wish myself away talking to any Suffolk old woman in her cottage, while the trees murmured without.

An earlier letter (April, 1838) describes one of London's compensations :

We have had Alfred Tennyson here ; very droll, and very wayward : and much sitting up of nights till two and three in the morning with pipes in our mouths : at which good hour we would get Alfred to give us some of his magic music, which he does between growling and smoking ; and so to bed. All this has not cured my Influenza as you may

imagine : but these hours shall be remembered long after the Influenza is forgotten.

There is an allusion to these London days in the dedication to Tennyson's *Tiresias*, which begins—

Old Fitz, who from your suburb grange,
Where once I tarried for a while,
Glance at the wheeling Orb of change,
And greet it with a kindly smile ;
Whom yet I see as there you sit
Beneath your sheltering garden-tree,
And watch your doves about you flit,
And plant on shoulder, hand and knee,
Or on your head their rosy feet,
As if they knew your diet spares
Whatever moved in that full sheet
Let down to Peter at his prayers ;
Who live on milk and meal and grass. . . .

and flows onward to the incomparably felicitous close, where the poet asks "Fitz" to take the book

Less for its own than for the sake
Of one recalling gracious times,
When, in our younger London days,
You found some merit in my rhymes,
And I more pleasure in your praise.

Mr. FitzGerald had three hobbies—music, gardening, and sailing. Although no creator, he had the true musician's feeling for all that was beautiful in music, and was wont, said his friend Archdeacon Groome, to "get such full harmonies out of the organ . . . as did good to the listener." He also composed a little.

Sailing was perhaps his keenest joy, and in his boat "The Scandal" (so named because that was the staple product of Woodbridge), which always carried a heavy cargo of books, he spent some of the wealthiest hours of his life. Now and then Mr. Barton was tempted to accompany him. Of one voyage which they had together Mr. FitzGerald wrote :—

Nor can the present writer forget the last out-of-door party he enjoyed with this amiable man. It was in last June, down his favourite river Deben to the Sea. Though far from well, when once on board he would be cheerful ; was as lively and hearty as any at the little inn at which we disembarked to regale ourselves ; and had a word of cheery salute for every boat or vessel that passed or met us as we drifted home again with a dying breeze at close of evening.

In later life, owing to the death of his favourite boatman, Mr. FitzGerald gave up sailing, and took to gardening instead, but his love of the river and the sea never diminished.

Edward FitzGerald wrote very little, and published less. He had inflexible belief in the desirability of putting forth the best, and the best only. He writes to B.B.—

I know that I could write volume after volume as well as others of the mob of gentlemen who write with ease ; but I think unless a man can do better, he had best not do at all.

adding kindly, for the Quaker poet's reassurance,—

With you the case is different, who have so long been a follower of the Muse, and who have had a kindly, sober, English, wholesome, religious spirit within you that has communicated kindred warmth to many honest souls.

His first and last published works had relation to Suffolk ; for the first was the "little dapper memoir" (as he called it) of Bernard Barton, from which so many extracts have already been given ; and the last was *Readings in Crabbe*, a selection from *Tales of the Hall*. In the interim he translated Sophocles, Calderon, and the Persian poets Omar Khayyám and Jámí ; and he did a little original writing. All his work is remarkable ; but it is by his marvellous translation, or transfusion, as it has been happily called, of the *Rubáiyát* that Edward FitzGerald is best known and will be remembered. It is difficult to believe that the haunting beauty of these limpid quatrains will ever be forgotten while books are read at all.

Edward FitzGerald has another claim on our gratitude by reason of his letters, which are among the best in the language. They reveal the writer as a man of the keenest intelligence and shrewd humour, with unerring instinct for the best, and a fine scorn for all things contemptible and cheap. They reveal moreover a mind noble and charitable, and a heart as tender as a woman's.

The letters to the Quaker poet although not the most entertaining, are the only ones with which we are concerned. A few selections follow. The first of any value which has been preserved is dated April, 1838, and ends thus :

Now I must finish my letter : and a very stupid one it is. Here is a sentence of Warburton's that, I think, is very wittily expressed : though why I put it in here is not very discoverable. 'The Church, like the Ark of Noah, is worth

saving: not for the sake of the unclean beasts that almost filled it, and probably made most noise and clamour in it, but for the little corner of rationality, that was as much distressed by the stink within, as by the tempest without.' Is it not good? It is out of his letters: and the best thing in them. It is also the best thing in mine.

The next extract (June, 1838) touches painting only, a subject frequently dwelt upon in his letters to B.B.: "You have often received a letter from me on a Sunday, haven't you?" he asks at another time, adding, "I think I used to write you an account of the picture purchases of the week, that you might have something to reflect upon in your silent meeting. (N.B. This is very wrong, and I don't mean it.)" Mr. Fitzgerald, himself no mean artist, was an indefatigable picture buyer. This is the extract:

I do not know very much of Salvator: is he not rather a melodramatic painter? No doubt, very fine in his way. But Claude and the two Poussins are the great ideal painters of Landscape. Nature looks more stedfast in them than in other painters: all is wrought up into a quietude and harmony that seem eternal. This is also one of the mysterious charms in the Holy Families of Raffaele and of the early painters before him: the faces of the Madonnas are beyond the discomposure of passion, and their very draperies betoken an Elysian atmosphere where wind never blew. The best painter of the unideal Christ is, I think, Rembrandt: as one may see in his picture at the National Gallery, and that most wonderful one of our Saviour and the Disciples at Emmaus in the Louvre: there they sit at supper as they might have sat. Rubens and the Venetian Painters did neither one thing nor the other: their holy figures are neither ideal nor real: and it is incongruous to see one of the Rubens' brawny boors dressed

up in the ideal red and blue drapery with which the early Italians clothed their figures of Christ. But enough of all this.

A year later (July 24, 1839), Mr. FitzGerald is at Bedford, the "land of old Bunyan." He says whimsically—

I begin to have dreadful suspicions that this fruitless way of life is not looked upon with satisfaction by the open eyes above. One really ought to dip for a little misery: perhaps however all this ease is only intended to turn sour by and bye, and so to poison one by the very nature of self-indulgence. Perhaps again as idleness is so very great a trial of virtue, the idle man who keeps himself tolerably chaste &c., may deserve the highest reward: the more idle, the more deserving. Really I don't jest: but I don't propound these things as certain.

There is a fine touch in the next letter (October, 1839):

Thank you for the picture of my dear old Bredfield which you have secured for me: it is most welcome. . . . Some of the tall ash-trees about it used to be visible at sea: but I think their topmost branches are decayed now. This circumstance I put in, because it will tell in your verse illustration of the view. From the road before the lawn, people used plainly to see the topmasts of the men-of-war lying in Hollesley bay during the war. I like the idea of this; the old English house holding up its enquiring chimneys and weathercocks (there is great physiognomy in weathercocks) toward the far-off seas and the ships upon it.

Later in the letter we come to this passage, wherein a deeper note is struck:

I have gone through Homer's Iliad—sorry to have finished it. The accounts of the Zoolu people, with Dingarn, their king, &c., give one a very good idea of the

Homeric heroes, who were great brutes : but superior to the Gods who governed them : which also has been the case with most nations. It is a lucky thing that God made Man, and that Man has not to make God : we should fare badly, judging by the specimens already produced—Frankenstein Monster Gods, formed out of the worst and rottenest scraps of humanity—gigantic—and to turn destructively upon their Creators—

‘ But be ye of good cheer ! I have overcome the world.’

So speaks a gentle voice.

When Mr. FitzGerald was in Suffolk the correspondence between himself and Mr. Barton was, of course, superseded by personal intercourse : hence there are sometimes long spaces between the letters. In January, 1842, he writes—

You tell my Father you mean to write a Poem about my invisibility—and somehow it seems strange to myself that I have been so long absent from Woodbridge. It was a toss up (as boys say—and perhaps Gods) whether I should go now ;—the toss has decided I should not. On the contrary I am going to see Donne at Mattishall : a visit, which, having put off a fortnight ago, I am now determined to pay. But if I do not see you before I go to London, I shall assuredly be down again by the latter part of February : when toasted cheese and ale shall again unite our souls. You need not however expect that I can return to such familiar intercourse as once (in former days) passed between us. New honours in society have devolved upon me the necessity of a more dignified deportment. A letter has been sent from the Secretary of the Ipswich Mechanics’ Institution asking me to Lecture—any subject but Party Politics or Controversial Divinity. On my politely declining, another, a fuller, and a more pressing, letter was sent urging me to comply with their demand : I answered to the same effect,

but with accelerated dignity. I am now awaiting the third request in confidence: if you see no symptoms of its being mooted, perhaps you will kindly propose it. I have prepared an answer.

At the end of a letter from which a quotation has already been made, dated April 11, 1844, is this passage:

Oh this wonderful wonderful world, and we who stand in the middle of it are all in a maze, except poor Matthews of Bedford, who fixes his eyes upon a wooden Cross and has no misgiving whatsoever. When I was at his chapel on Good Friday, he called at the end of his grand sermon on some of the people to say merely this, that they believed Christ had redeemed them: and first one got up and in sobs declared she believed it: and then another, and then another—I was quite overset:—all poor people: how much richer than all who fill the London Churches. Theirs is the kingdom of Heaven!

This is a sad farrago. Farewell.

Writing from Leamington in October, 1844, he says—

I expect to be here about a week, and I mean to give a day to looking over the field of Edgehill, on the top of which, I have ascertained, there is a very delightful pot-house, commanding a very extensive view. Don't you wish to sit at ease in such a high tower, with a pint of porter at your side, and to see beneath you the ground that was galloped over by Rupert and Cromwell two hundred years ago, in one of the richest districts of England, and on one of the finest days in October, for such my day is to be?

In the meanwhile I cast regretful glances of memory back to my garden at Boulge, which I want to see dug up and replanted. I have bought anemone roots which in the Spring shall blow Tyrian dyes, and Irises of a newer and more brilliant prism than Noah saw in the clouds.

A somewhat similar passage occurs in a letter of November 27th :

We see a fine white frost over the grass this morning ; and I suppose you have rubbed your hands and cried, 'Oh Lauk, how cold it is !' twenty times before I write this. Now one's pictures become doubly delightful to one. I certainly love winter better than summer. Could one but know, as one sits within the tropic latitude of one's fire-side, that there was not increased want, cold, and misery, beyond it !

So much for winter. Spring, when it comes, steals, as it always does, all his affections. On April 3rd, 1845, he writes—

I have been loitering out in the garden here this golden day of Spring. The woodpigeons coo in the covert ; the frogs croak in the pond ; the bees hum about some thyme ; and some of my smaller nieces have been busy gathering primroses, 'all to make posies suitable to this present month.' I cannot but think with a sort of horror of being in London now : but I doubt I must be ere long. . . . I have abjured all Authorship, contented at present with the divine Poem which Great Nature is now composing about us. These primroses seem more wonderful and delicious Annuals than Ackerman ever put forth. I suppose no man ever grew so old as not to feel younger in Spring.

We have no more quotations to make from the letters to Mr. Barton. There are however others with direct bearing upon his life. In 1847, Mr. FitzGerald writes to Samuel Laurence about a portrait of Bernard Barton, which that artist was to paint, urging him to make haste :

He [B. B.] is now sixty-three ; and it won't do, you know, for grand-climacterical people to procrastinate—nay,

to *proannuate*—which is a new, and, for all I see, a very bad word.

Directions follow as to how the painter shall get to Woodbridge, and then the words—

I write thus much because my friends seem anxious ; my friend, I mean, Miss Barton : for Barton pretends he dreads having his portrait done ; which is ‘my eye.’ So come and do it. He is a generous, worthy, simple-hearted, fellow : worth ten thousand better wits.

The portrait, a beautiful drawing in coloured chalks, which now hangs in the place of honour in the house of Bernard Barton’s daughter, is reproduced as the frontispiece to this book. During the sittings humorous passages from Dickens were read to the poet.

In February, 1849, Mr. FitzGerald writes again to Samuel Laurence—

Barton is out of health ; some affection of the heart, I think, that will never leave him, never let him be what he was when you saw him. He is forced to be very abstemious . . . but he bears his illness quite as a man ; and looks very demurely to the necessary end of all life.

Edward FitzGerald, who subsequently became the husband of Lucy Barton, survived B.B. by thirty-four years. He died in 1883, while on his annual visit to the Rev. George Crabbe, the grandson of the poet, at Merton Rectory, leaving behind him a memory that will long be green and sweet on the country side, and one work of art which is never likely to be surpassed. Of his death Tennyson wrote, in the epilogue to “Tiresias”—

Gone into darkness, that full light
Of friendship ! past, in sleep, away
By night, into the deeper night !
The deeper night ? A clearer day
Than our poor twilight dawn on earth—
If night, what barren toil to be !
What life, so maim'd by night, were worth
Our living out ? Not mine to me
Remembering all the golden hours
Now silent, and so many dead,
And him the last ; and laying flowers,
This wreath, above his honour'd head,
And praying that, when I from hence
Shall fade with him into the unknown,
My close of earth's experience
May prove as peaceful as his own.

CHAPTER IX.

FRIENDS OF LATER DAYS.

And thus our best affections, those which bind
Heart unto heart by friendship's purest tie,
Have an internal life, and are enshrined
Too deeply in our bosoms soon to die.
Spring's opening bloom and summer's azure sky
Might lend them animation scarce their own ;
But when November winds are loud and high,
And Nature's dirge assumes its deepest tone,
The joy of social hours in fullest charm is known.

To a Friend.

IN later life Mr. Barton found a new friend in William Bodham Donne, to whom he was introduced by Edward FitzGerald. Mr. Donne was then living at Mattishall, in Norfolk, whither B.B. occasionally journeyed ; but he afterwards exchanged this pleasant home for the City, becoming first the Librarian of the London Library and afterwards Reader of

Plays, a post held by him until his death in 1882. He was a ripe scholar, and a man of sound taste, rich humour, and thoughtful kindness: "one of the finest gentlemen I know," wrote one of his friends.

Perhaps one of Mr. Donne's greatest attractions to B.B. was his kinship with Cowper, for whom the Quaker poet had a reverence not to be exaggerated. Mr. Donne not only was himself related to Cowper's mother, herself a descendant of John Donne the metaphysical poet, but he married a lady whose mother was a sister of Cowper's cousin and friend, the Rev. John Johnson, "Johnny of Norfolk." Furthermore, there lived under his roof Mrs. Anne Bodham, the widow of the Rev. Thomas Bodham, of Mattishall, where Cowper had sojourned in 1795. Mrs. Bodham, who was the daughter of the Rev. Roger Donne, of Catfield, in Norfolk, the poet's uncle, had romped with her illustrious cousin when a child. Moreover, in later life she gave him the purse which drew forth the stanzas beginning—

My gentle Anne, whom heretofore,
When I was young, and thou no more
Than plaything for a nurse,
I danced and fondled on my knee,
A kitten both in size and glee . . .
I thank thee for my purse.

And she once spent a parson's week, "that is to say, about a fortnight and no longer," with Cowper and Mrs. Unwin. But—chiefly—it was Mrs. Bodham who sent to the poet his mother's picture, and by this simple act inspired

one of the most beautiful poems in this or any language. Bernard Barton's feelings towards so sacred a lady can easily be imagined. Writing to Mr. Donne in 1840, he says—

Pray make my very kindest respects to Mrs. Donne, and my most reverential ones to Mrs. Bodham. I believe I am more proud of having sat on a sofa with her, than of having, or being about to have, a ship named after me. The 'Bernard Barton' may go to the bottom (though I hope better things for her,—how odd it seems to write of myself in the feminine gender!) and her fate may bring disgrace on my name, as having tended to bring about such a catastrophe; but nothing in the unrolled scroll of the future, so long as that future is passed by me in this state of being, can cheat me out of the remembrance of that bright hour or two at Mattishall, and in its environs. There are few in my life that I have lived over again with more delight.

I am finishing my letter, begun three days ago, in my own little study, six feet square, at the witching hour of night, having just closed two ponderous ledgers brought out of the bank, to do lots of figure-work, after working there from nine to six. I only wish I had thee in the opposite chair, to take a pinch of snuff out of the Royal George¹, or another, as interesting a relic, standing by me on the table—a plain wooden box, the original cost of which might be 2s. 6d. or 3s.; but to me it has a worth passing show, having been the working-box and table-companion of Crabbe the poet. It was given me by his son and biographer, and I prize it far beyond a handsome silver one, Crabbe's dress box, which I think his son told me he gave to Murray.

This brings us to the Rev. George Crabbe, the second of that name, and the son of "Nature's sternest painter, yet her best." Mr. Crabbe was

¹ A snuff-box made out of the recovered wood of the 'Royal George.'

born in 1785, and was educated by his father and at Cambridge. After some years of service as a curate, he was presented, in 1834, with the livings of Bredfield and Petistree, in Suffolk, and at Bredfield he lived until his death in 1857. Mr. Barton therefore did not know him until comparatively late in life, but they soon became the firmest friends, and no visitor was more warmly welcomed to the Rectory than the Quaker poet. The regard was returned, and the amiable Bredfield group would not infrequently gather round B.B.'s tea-table. Mr. Crabbe was himself an author, having written the life of his father for Mr. Murray, but he was a man first. Says Mr. Leslie Stephen : "He inherited his father's humour, was a sturdy, old-fashioned gentleman, enjoying long walks amidst fine scenery or to objects of antiquarian interest, and professing a hearty contempt for verse, except, apparently, his father's." ¹

Although Bredfield is only a short distance from Woodbridge, Mr. Barton's opportunities for walking thither were not frequent, nor was he disposed for much exercise ; consequently much of his intercourse with Mr. Crabbe was carried on by letter. Here is a note touching pedestrianism, written in 1847 :

Dear C.—

Thou hast no notion what an effort it is to me to get out, or thou wouldst marvel not at my staying at home. Did not Solomon say there is a time for going out, and a time for staying at home. If he did not, he ought to have said it ; and his omission negatives not the fact.

1 From *The Dictionary of National Biography*.

I yet hope to see Bredfield one day or the other ; but the *when* and the *how* are hid from me. My walking faculties are not what they used to be ; and *flying* is too costly to have recourse to. Besides, my good old friend, I can't make out that it is any farther from Bredfield to Woodbridge than it is from here to thine ; yet I think I perform that pious pilgrimage three times to thy one. Think of that, and make allowance for my old age and growing infirmities. Thine, with love to all the youngers, *hes* and *shes*, ever truly,

BERNARDUS.

With these "youngers" Mr. Barton was a special favourite, as, in fact, he was with all "youngers," and great fun did they have together at hospitable Bredfield. Here are other extracts from B.B.'s letters to Mr. Crabbe :

Many years ago I wrote some verses for a Child's Annual, to accompany a print of Doddridge's mother teaching him Bible History from the Dutch tiles round their fire-place. I had clean forgotten both the print and my verses ; but some one has sent me a child's penny cotton handkerchief, on which I find a transcript of that identical print, and four of my stanzas printed under it. This handkerchief celebrity tickles me somewhat. 'Talk of fame! is not this a fame which comes home, not only to '*men's business and bosoms*,' but to children's noses, into the bargain ! Tom Churchyard calls it an indignity, an insult, looks scornful [this is a good word—a Suffolkism] at it ; and says he would cuff any urchin whom he caught blowing his nose on one of his sketches ! All this arises from his not knowing the complicated nature and texture of all worldly fame. 'Tis like the image the Babylonish King dreamt of with its golden head, baser metal lower down, and miry clay for the feet. It will not do to be fastidious ; you must take the idol as it is ; its gold sconce, if you can get it ; if not, take

the clay feet, or one toe of another foot, and be thankful, and make what you can of it. I write verse to be read ! it is a matter of comparative indifference to me whether I am read from a fine bound book, on a drawing-room table, or spelt over from a penny rag of a kerchief by the child of a peasant or a weaver. So, honour to the cotton printer, say I, whoever he be ; that bit of rag is my patent as a household poet.

A few hours later, the following remarks concerning letter writing, on which art B.B. was no mean authority, were penned and posted :

My dear Friend,

Here goes for my second letter to thee this blessed day. If that a'nt being a *letter-ary* character I should like to know what is. Some folks make a great fuss about writing letters ; they pretend to say they can't write a letter ; they never know what to say ; yet they can *talk*, an hour by the clock ! as if there were any more difficulty in talking on paper than in a noisier lingo. I never could understand the difference. Not that I should prefer epistolizing with a friend to having him *tête-à-tête* ; but no one can carry his friends about with him ; and when you are two miles apart you can no more hope to make a friend *hear* you, than if you were twenty or two hundred. *Then* talking on paper seems to me just as natural and easy as talking with your tongue ; and so it would be to everyone else, if they did not think it necessary to write fine letters, and say something smart or striking. This lies at the bottom of it. A man cares little, by comparison, what he blurts out, *vivâ voce*, he thinks he may say a silly thing with impunity, it can't stand on record against him ; but when he gets a pen in his hand, he fancies, forsooth, he has a character to win, or to keep, for being eloquent, witty, or profound ; the natural result is, he writes a stupid, unnatural letter ; then says he hates letter-writing, and wonders how anybody can like it. Women,

who act more on impulse than we do, and make fewer metaphysical distinctions, and are less conceited, though they may have a pretty sprinkling of vanity, beat us out and out at letter-writing. A letter with a woman, if she be good for anything, is an affair of the heart rather than the head, so they put more heart into their letters.

The subject is not yet exhausted, for four days afterwards B.B. says—

I am inclined to think I did not go *far enough* in my position that it is as easy to write as to talk. I have a great notion it is much easier, at least I find I can always give utterance to my own thoughts and feelings with more readiness, ease, and fluency, on paper than orally—and I cannot conceive why others should not. In company, conversation may be going on all round you, and your attention is apt to be divided and distracted—even in a *tête-à-tête* you must have two duties to perform, that of listener, as well as speaker, and in your desire not to engross more than your share of the talk, you are not unlikely to get less. In *vivâ voce* converse too, how often it happens that you cannot think of the very thing you most wanted to say. Many a time, after a long and moody discussion of a topic with a friend about a subject on which we took opposite views, I have called to mind, when too late to be of any use to me, some pithy argument which would have blown all his to atoms, and which I should have been almost sure to have had at my fingers' ends had I been quietly arguing the matter on paper in my own study.

The letter hereafter printed, beginning with an inquiry into the mystery of friendship, is dated "8 month, 20, 1846":

My dear Friend,

I was going to begin 'My dear old Friend,' for I have sometimes hard work to convince myself that our

acquaintance is only of few years' standing. There are natures so intrenched in all sorts of artificial outworks, each of which must be deliberately carried by siege ere you can get at what there is of nature in them, that you had need *know* them, in conventional phraseology, half or a quarter of a life, ere you know aught about them. There are others whom, by a sort of instinctive free-masonry, you seem old friends with at once. The value of the acquisition depends not always on the time and labour it costs to make it—it is very often clean the contrary ; for it by no means unfrequently turns out, that what has cost you much time and pains to get at is worth little when obtained. I speak not of principles or truths, which you must find out for yourself, and this must often be a slow process ; but I am talking of those who profess them, and these, methinks, ought to be more promptly discernible and discoverable. Man would not be such a riddle to man, did not too many of us wear masks, and intrench ourselves in all sorts of conventionalities and formalities. I do not think there is much of these in either of *us* ; and that I take it is the reason why we have got all the more readily at each other. Enough, however, of this long introduction, which I have blundered into with design or malice aforethought.

We come now to the Churchyard family, by whom Mr. Barton was always welcomed with affectionate warmth. Thomas Churchyard was in many ways a remarkable man. He was a lawyer with too little love for the profession ever to attain eminence in it : he was an artist of such ability that had he only had right training he might have achieved a fame hardly less than that of his great exemplar, Constable. As it was, Thomas Churchyard remained to the end of his days a lawyer with

a taste for painting. We find Mr. FitzGerald writing to Samuel Laurence—

My Constable has been greatly admired, and is reckoned quite genuine by our great judge, Mr. Churchyard. Mr. C. paints himself (not in *body* colours, as you waggishly insinuate), and nicely, too. He understands Gainsborough, Constable, and Old Crome.

His un-professional industry was amazing. He never returned from a country walk without one or two new sketches in his pocket book, while the best part of every day on which he did not ramble was spent in his studio. What B.B. did for Woodbridge with his pen Tom Churchyard did with his brush, and between them there cannot be one favoured spot within a radius of ten miles of the town uncommemorated in poem or picture.

The poet and the painter were the most intimate cronies: the word crony here being taken to mean a friend to whom one resorts in gay moments rather than at those times when shadows are falling. Many were the cheerful evenings which Mr. Barton spent in the Churchyards' hospitable home. The Lawyer's opinion of the latest pictorial "find" was always eagerly sought before the public gaze rested upon it; and the two connoisseurs frequently exchanged works of art. Now and then the poet would send round a barrel of oysters or some other delicacy; such a present being gladly received both for itself and for the assurance it carried that the giver would follow at evening to share the feast. On other nights

the artist would walk over to the bank house. At these meetings merriment ran high. Sometimes Edward FitzGerald was of the party, and sometimes he was in his turn the host. Writing to Samuel Laurence in 1843, he says—

On Saturday I give supper to B. Barton and Churchyard. I wish you could be with us. We are the chief wits of Woodbridge, and one man has said that he envies our conversations! So we flatter each other in the country.

In 1839, we find the following cheery lines addressed by B. B. "To T. C.—at Forty-one," a good example of the Quaker Poet's lighter vein :

On the birthday of a King,
Or a Queen, let Laureates sing ;
And to recompense their lay,
Quaff their sack, or pouch their pay ;
In such odes I see no fun ;
Here's to Tom—at forty-one !

If a Poet's wish could tell,
Doubt not I would wish thee well ;
Yet what could best wish of mine
Give—but is already thine ?
Wife and bairns, surpassed by none—
These are thine at forty-one !

With a good house o'er thy head,
And a table—amply spread ;
With a fire-side warm and bright,
Faces all in smiles bedight ;
Thus may Life's sands sparkling run
As they do at forty-one.

With good paintings on each wall,
Holding sense and sight in thrall ;
Morlands, Constables, and Cromes—
Good as grace much prouder domes,
Sip thy wine and bite thy bun,
And so welcome forty-one !

With good pictures of thy own,
Wearing Nature's tint and tone ;
And a love for others, too,
Be they but to Nature true.
What with brush, and dog and gun,
Thou'rt still young at forty-one !

May old age forbear to mar
E'en a puff of thy cigar,
Or impair thine eye or hand,
Or o'ercloud thy household band ;
But may every boon be thine
Friendship's blessing would assign.
Now my Birthday rhyme is done—
Good-bye ! Tom ! at forty-one !

Thomas Churchyard had three daughters who inherited his artistic gift, but were deprived of much of the benefit such a possession might have been to them by the loss of regular training. They still live in Woodbridge, and have many pleasant memories of Bernard Barton. When, in 1844, Ellen, the eldest, was sent away to Bury St. Edmunds to school, the poet was at the pains of writing her a monthly letter, wherein were chronicled the news of Woodbridge and his own doings, accompanied with much good counsel. By Miss Churchyard's permission the following extract from the first

of the series, dated August 6th, 1844, finds its way into print :

Dear Nelly,

Should good Mrs. Jay [of Bury St. Edmunds], knowing nothing of my handwriting, manifest the slightest curiosity who thy correspondent is,—and I allow it is the duty of ladies admitting pupils of thy age, my dear, to know somewhat of those who write letters to them,—tell her at once that this and any future sheet similarly superscribed, comes from an old man of sixty, a Quaker into the bargain, who has written heaps of rhymes in his day, and continues to take heaps of snuff, and to make long rows of figures, and add 'em up, and carry them over from one week to another ; and if, on hearing all this, she does not say, ' My dear, Mr. Barton may write to you as often as he chooses, you cannot have a more unexceptionable correspondent '—or make some pretty little speech of the sort ;—why, it will only prove she does not yet know me as well as the good folks of Woodbridge.

Ellen Churchyard has a further interest to us in being the "Very Young Housewife" to whom B.B. addressed these graceful stanzas :

To write a book of household song,
Without one verse to thee,
Whom I have known and loved so long,
Were all unworthy me.

Have I not seen thy needle plied
With as much ready glee,
As if it were thy greatest pride
A sempstress famed to be ?

Have I not ate pies, pudding, tarts,
And bread, thy hands had kneaded,
All excellent—as if those arts
Were all that thou hadst heeded ?

Have I not seen thy cheerful smile,
And heard thy voice as gay,
As if such household cares, the while,
To thee were sport and play?

Yet can thy pencil copy well
Landscape, or flower, or face;
And thou canst waken music's spell
With simple, natural grace.

Thus variously to play thy part,
Before thy teens are spent,
Honours far more thy head and heart,
Than mere accomplishment!

So wear the wreath thou well hast won;
And be it understood
I frame it not in idle fun
For girlish womanhood.

But in it may a lesson lurk,
Worth teaching now-a-days;
That girls may do all household work,
Nor lose a poet's praise!

A year or so after the poet's death, Mr. FitzGerald grangerised a copy of the selections from his poems and letters, calling in the assistance of Mr. Churchyard and two of his daughters. A very charming volume was the result, rich in water-colour drawings of the Barton country, some of them, particularly those of the Deben, being of great beauty. Mr. Churchyard died in 1865, at the age of sixty-seven. He left behind him a large collection of pictures and sketches, many of which have been engraved in publications descriptive

of the county. To a patriotic Suffolk man an album of his water-colour drawings would be of incalculable value.

Among Bernard Barton's younger friends, in whose company he could shake off his years as easily as a Newfoundland dog can shake off drops of water, were Elizabeth ("Libby") and Maria Louisa Charlesworth, the daughters of the Rev. John Charlesworth, rector of Flowton, in Suffolk. Maria Charlesworth (1819-1880) afterwards became the author of that very favourite nursery-book, *Ministering Children*, and many other religious works. To Elizabeth, who is now the wife of Professor Cowell, of Cambridge, we owe *Leaves of Memory*. Listening with a lingering ear to memories of a full and happy past,

'And noting ere they fade away
The little lines of yesterday,'

her charming book becomes "Leaves of Memory" to many others beside the author. "Libby" seems to have been a somewhat lax correspondent, for we find B.B. on one occasion at least chaffing her thus pleasantly :

I begin to grow sceptical myself, not as to the fact of letters being writeable, but as to there being such a person as Elizabeth Charlesworth to write them. . . . I begin to have the oddest and queerest misgivings as to whether that migratory life of thine thou hast lived so long, may not have attenuated all that was bodily in thee into air, thin air ! and when one begins to admit a doubt as to the bodily existence of an old correspondent, hosts of thick-coming fancies flock in ; if I begin to doubt whether there be *now* a Libby Charlesworth in positive and real substance moving

about on this world of ours, what proof have I there ever was such a person? I once read a very ingenious treatise written to show that there never was such a person as Napoleon ; methinks I could write one full as plausible to show that there never was an Elizabeth Charlesworth. While I kept on having letters from thee, a sort of vague idea that there was some where a somebody, or something, corporeal or spiritual, or both, which answered—being so addressed or apostrophized, tended to perpetuate the idea of thy reality. I could think of thee, as one does of the wandering Jew of antiquity, and I had thoughts of addressing thee in verse, with these lines of Wordsworth for my motto :

O, Cuckoo ! shall I call thee bird ?
Or but a wandering *voice* ?

But the voice having ceased to make its responses, I am at a loss what to think, or to do ; so I just scribble these lines as a sort of last resource, a forlorn hope.

After one of his very uncommon departures from Woodbridge, in 1844, he writes to Maria Charlesworth—

I go out so rarely that I am in a state of bewilderment on such occasions, and seem to myself to be as one walking in a dream. It can therefore hardly be strange that I should have lost thy letter, having at that period lost myself.—Don't think it any mark of disrespect to thyself, for had I been favoured with one from the queen of Sheba, on the theory of Mrs. Elizabeth Rowe's *Letters from the Dead to the Living*, it would in all likelihood have fared no better. How should a man be a safe keeper of anything, when, a change of locality having clean taken him out of himself, he is no longer, in fact, himself. I have been home two days, but I am not myself yet. It will take a good fortnight ere I shall fully regain my personal identity. I keep picking up, in lucid intervals, first one and then another of the *disjuncta*

membra of my old self—as children put together a dissected puzzle, which they have a vague memory of having put together before. But enough of this confused babble.

The following letter to Maria tells its own story. A whole carriageful of Bernard Barton's friends had one afternoon in 1844 suddenly appeared and as suddenly vanished. Almost before they could have left Woodbridge behind them, B.B. sat down to write—

Dear Maria,

Does not this 'look like business'?—as Constable's men said to my artist friend, when he set up his easel behind Flatford Mill, to paint Willy Lott's house. I have hardly started thee from our gate, when I am in my cabin writing a letter, or letteret, to greet thee at the morrow's breakfast table. What I shall find to put into it, I will not stop to ask myself. First and foremost, Lucy and the monkey¹ send all sorts of kind and cordial greetings, which they say must be specially welcome after the absence of a whole night. Secondly, we are all of us charmed with your flying visit, and should have been still more charmed had it been a less flying one, for the whole thing was such a whirl, there was not time to group you in tableaux, far less to study or contemplate you individually; it was for all the world like a peep into a kaleidoscope, before the component items have shaped themselves into any symmetrical whole; and so you keep flitting before my vision at this moment. Grandmamma prominent one minute, then those Tivetshall girls, then Libby and thee. Then come Samuel and the Etonian, and Miss B—— bringing up the rear. It was certainly a thing to be thankful for, to get such a group together, even to have a glimpse of, but one can hardly help regretting it was for a

1 A pet niece.

glimpse only. Old proverbs, 'tis true, say somewhat of welcoming the coming and speeding the parting guest. But the latter was scarcely necessary when guests speed themselves off so rapidly. However, I will not grumble, but try and be most thankful for the moment you did give us.

We come lastly to Major Edward Moor. In a brief but exquisitely done memoir of Bernard Barton, which Mr. FitzGerald wrote for a Suffolk paper in 1849, he says—

Scarce a year has elapsed since the death of one of his [B.B.'s] oldest and dearest friends—Major Moor—whose praise he justly celebrated in verse. Major Moor was also as well known to the public by his books, as much beloved by a large circle of friends. These two men were, perhaps, of equal abilities, though of a different kind: their virtues equal and the same. Long does the memory of such men haunt the places of their mortal abode; stirring within us, perhaps, at the close of many a day, as the sun sets over the scenes with which they were so long associated. It is surely not improper to endeavour to record something to the honour of such men in their own neighbourhoods. Nay, should we not, if we could, make their histories as public as possible? for surely none could honour them without loving them, and, perhaps, unconsciously striving to follow in their footsteps.

There is this further testimony to Major Moor's sweetness of character in one of Mr. FitzGerald's letters to Mrs. E. B. Cowell (Miss E. Charlesworth):

Also I shall send you dear Major Moor's *Oriental Fragments*; an almost worthless Book, I doubt, to those who do not know him—which means, *love* him! And somehow

all of us in our corner of Suffolk knew something of him : and so again loved something of him. For there was nothing at all about him not to be beloved.

To such a tribute it is impossible to add anything but bare fact. Major Edward Moor was an Indian officer who, on his retirement, settled at Great Bealings, in Suffolk, and interested himself in county affairs. He was the author of a glossary of Suffolk words and many pamphlets on political and other matters. One of his books, describing some mysterious bell-ringing at the Major's house, was written for sale at a Woodbridge bazaar in 1841 ; and to this work B. B. contributed a metrical prologue and epilogue, together with a letter to the author which contains this passage :

The crying folly of this utilitarian age, is to have every thing made clear : it is in harmony with its superficial impertinence to decry all mystery : to want to have everything proved by demonstration, and clearly accounted for, on philosophical principles. I have small sympathy with such shallow philosophy, and am always glad when anything, however trivial, occurs, which makes such would-be knowing ones at fault. If I knew how thy bells were rung, methinks I would not tell every one ; though I should like to, to be able to gratify thy own *rational* curiosity. However, I am well content it should still remain a mystery. It is far more poetical than if it were cleared up. Then the odds are, there would be little in it. Now there is somewhat, though not much, perhaps, beyond its being incomprehensible ; and that is something now-a-days. . . . We are getting as hard as the nether millstone—as dry as ‘the remainder biscuit after a voyage’ : like old Cutting of Playford, who used to boast he believed nothing that he heard,

and only half of what he saw. I hold not with the Cuttingonian Philosophy, but am always willing to take marvels on trust, when reported by a lover of truth like thyself.

The following sonnet was addressed by Bernard Barton to Major Moor :

I pity him who, having wandered long,
Returns at last o'er Ocean's tossing foam
A heartless exile to an English home !
Who finds no music in his country's song ;
Whose eye can do her lovely landscapes wrong,—
And from a lowly cot, or lordly dome,
Rear'd on his *native* soil, still sighs to roam,
Nor finds a friend amid her free-born throng.
Him I congratulate, who, after years
Of toil and danger on a distant shore,
Comes back to love life's early scenes the more,
And prove, in home's sweet smiles, and pangless tears,
How absence to an English heart endears
Her scenery and her manners, laws and lore.

Major Moor died in 1848, and shortly after appeared a "Brief Memorial" from Bernard Barton's pen.

There were numberless other men and women of prominence with whom Mr. Barton had shaken hands, but his circumstances and disinclination to travel necessarily limited his circle of intimate friends to his neighbours. In earlier life, at the *London Magazine* dinners, to which he very occasionally went, he saw most of the contributors to that excellent but short-lived periodical. In 1824, at the house of Thomas Clarkson the abolitionist, at Playford, he met Southey; and many years later

at Mr. Donne's he was once or twice in the company of George Borrow, that indescribable man—humanist, novelist, linguist, pugilist, patriot, traveller, philosopher, and gipsy : in short, one of Nature's focuses. In 1844, we find B.B. visiting Bishop Sumner, of Winchester, to whom he had dedicated *A New Year's Eve*, in company with his brother John ; some record of which excursion is preserved in the following sonnet :

My brother, those, methinks, were pleasant hours,
It was our privilege to spend, erewhile,
In Farnham's ancient, castellated pile !
Lovely the landscape, from its lofty towers
Beheld at distance ; while its garden bowers,
Below our feet, wore beauty's softest smile,
As if those cedars' grandeur to beguile,
Still looking down on lawns yet gay with flowers.
Nor lacked the scene within charms all its own,
To make the few brief hours pass swiftly by ;
But, far as courteous hospitality
And genuine kindness could make welcome known,
Such, unaffectedly, were prompt, and prone
With each attraction out of doors to vie !

In the same year B.B. renewed his acquaintance with Sir George Airy, whom he had first known at Arthur Biddell's when the future Astronomer Royal was quite a lad. Then they were wont to walk together, discussing the last Waverley novel or the merits of modern poetry. In 1844, Mr. Barton met his old companion at the table of Sir Robert Peel, and very pleasantly they recalled those early times. Mr. Barton had communicated with Sir

Robert Peel on the subject of the income tax, which seemed to him to press unduly upon Bank clerks, and Sir Robert had asked him to dine. One result of the correspondence was the awakening in the Premier of an interest in the Quaker poet, which subsequently bore very desirable fruit, for on leaving office in 1846, Sir Robert recommended Mr. Barton to the Queen, to whom the poet had dedicated his *Household Verses* in 1845, as a subject worthy to receive an annual pension of one hundred pounds. This the Queen was pleased to grant. To the close of his life, says Mr. FitzGerald, the poet "continued, after his fashion, to send letters and occasional poems to Sir Robert, and to receive a few kind words in reply."

Bernard Barton left a vast quantity of correspondence from all kinds of persons, eminent and obscure. So numerous were they that only the other day was a final selection made. Among those notable letters which remain are autographs of Sir Walter Scott, Southey, Byron, and Jeffrey. Byron writes, under the date June, 1812, with reference to the Quaker poet's plan of leaving the bank and adopting literature as a profession. The letter is as good sense as was ever penned. After disposing of a business matter, Byron says—

I think more highly of your poetical talents than it would perhaps gratify you to hear expressed, for I believe, from what I observe of your mind, that you are above flattery. To come to the point, you deserve success; but we knew, before Addison wrote his *Cato*, that desert does not always command it. But suppose it attained—

‘ You know what ills the author’s life assail—
Toil, envy, want, the *patron*, and the jail.’

Do not renounce writing, but never trust entirely to authorship. If you have a profession, retain it ; it will be like Prior’s fellowship, a last and sure resource. Compare Mr. Rogers with other authors of the day ; assuredly he is among the first of living poets, but is it to that he owes his station in society and his intimacy in the best circles ? no, it is to his prudence and respectability. The world (a bad one, I own) courts him because he has no occasion to court it. He is a poet, nor is he less so because he was something more. I am not sorry to hear that you are not tempted by the vicinity of Capel Lofft, Esq., though if he had done for you what he has for the Bloomfields I should never have laughed at his rage for patronizing. But a truly well constituted mind will ever be independent. That you may be so is my sincere wish ; and if others think as well of your poetry as I do, you will have no cause to complain of your readers.—Believe me,

Your obliged and obedient Servant,

BYRON.

B. B.’s connection with his brilliant contemporary did not end there ; for strange, almost ludicrous, as it may sound, a copy of verses entitled “Madame Lavalette,” were, says the Quaker Poet in his preface to *Poems by an Amateur*, attributed in many quarters to the author of “Don Juan” !

In a letter, dated 1820, Lord Jeffrey pleads guilty to the authorship of an article in the *Edinburgh Review*, wherein Quaker traders were somewhat severely handled. That the body, he concludes,

has contained many eminent men since the days of Penn and Barclay no candid person will dispute. I have myself

the happiness of knowing several. I am well acquainted with Mr. Walker of London, and flatter myself I may call William Allen my friend. To the philanthropy and calm and wise perseverance of the body in all charitable undertakings I shall always be ready to do justice. But I trust I need make no professions on this subject, nor does it seem necessary to discuss further the points of difference between us. I suppose you don't expect to make a convert of me, and I certainly have not the least desire to shake you in your present convictions. There are plenty of topics, I hope, on which we may agree, and we need not seek after the exceptions. I shall be happy if my opinion of your poem can be ranged in the first class.

Bernard Barton's correspondence with Sir Walter Scott related to some documents touching Scottish affairs, discovered by the Quaker poet among the store of an autograph dealer at Ipswich. Mr. Barton however received from the Great Magician one note of a more personal kind. The Quaker Poet wrote, on behalf of a lady, to ask his illustrious brother-in-art for an autograph copy of some lines from *Marmion*. Sir Walter replied as follows under the date of October 4th, 1824 :

I have been lazy in sending you the two transcripts. In calling back the days of my youth, I was surprised into confessing what I might have as well kept to myself, that I had been guilty of sending persons a bat-hunting to see the ruins of Melrose by moonlight, which I never saw myself. The fact is rather curious, for as I have often slept nights at Melrose, (when I did not reside so near the place,) it is singular that I have not seen it by moonlight on some chance occasion. However, it so happens that I never did, and must (unless I get cold by going on purpose) be

contented with supposing that these ruins look very like other Gothic buildings which I have seen by the wan light of the moon.

When the accompanying quotation was examined, it was found to end not as was expected, thus :

Then go—but go alone the while—
Then view St. David's ruin'd pile ;
And home returning, soothly swear
Was never scene so sad and fair.

but in this amended form :

Then go—and meditate with awe
On scenes the author never saw,
Who never wandered by the moon
To see what could be seen by noon.

Robert Southey sent one or two kindly criticisms of B. B.'s poetry, and several communications having reference to Quakers, whose historian he was then thinking to become. In 1822, at a time when Mr. Barton's health was beginning to show signs of the strain of continual verse-making and figure work, alleviated by too little exercise, Southey tendered the following judicious advice :

I am much pleased with the 'Poet's Lot'—no, not with his lot, but with the verses in which he describes it. But let me ask you—are you not pursuing your studies intemperately, and to the danger of your health? To be 'writing long after midnight' and 'with a miserable headache' is what no man can do with impunity ; and what no pressure of business, no ardour of composition, has ever made me do. I beseech you, remember the fate of Kirke White ;—and remember that if you sacrifice your health (not to say your life) in the same manner, you will be held up to your

own community as a warning—not as an example for imitation. The spirit which disturbed poor Scott of Amwell¹ in his last illness will fasten upon your name ; and your fate will be instanced to prove the inconsistency of your pursuits with that sobriety and evenness of mind which Quakerism requires, and is intended to produce.

You will take this as it is meant, I am sure.

My friend, go early to bed ;—and if you eat suppers, read afterwards, but never compose, that you may lie down with a quiet intellect. There is an intellectual as well as a religious peace of mind ;—and without the former, be assured there can be no health for a poet. God bless you.

Yours very truly,

R. SOUTHEY.

1 As the following lines, entitled 'Scott of Amwell,' will show Bernard Barton was an admirer of the ill-fated bard :

In childhood's dawn, in boyhood's later days,
 Dear to my heart the Bard of Amwell's lays :
 Whether his Muse portray'd upon her scroll
 The ever-changing 'Seasons,' as they roll ;
 Or touch'd the heart's more tender sympathies,
Mourning the rupture of love's sweetest ties ;
 Or whether, with a genuine past'ral grace,
 The simple scenery round her loved to trace,
 And tune her Doric reed, or artless lyre,
 To AMWELL'S tufted groves, and modest spire ;
 Or, mindless how the world's vain glory frown'd,
 Denounced the martial 'drum's discordant sound' ;
 Or, true to Nature's social feelings, penn'd
 Sonnets and rhymes to many a distant friend ;—
 Whate'er the theme—truth, tenderness, in all
 Their echo woke, and held my heart in thrall.

And, even now, in health and strength's decay,
 Ay, on this cheerless, dull November day,
 When moaning winds through trees all leafless sigh,
 And all is sad that greets the ear and eye ;
 Now in my heart of hearts, I cherish still
 The lingering throb, the unextinguished thrill,
 Woke by the magic of his verse of yore,
 When new to me the Muse's gentle lore ;
 And gratefully confess the boundless debt
 Due to my boyhood's benefactor yet ;
 Nor boyhood's only—when his page I scan,
 What charm'd the child, still fascinates the man,
 And better test of merit none need claim,
 Than thus in youth and age to seem the same.

Other and more copious correspondents were poor Charles Lloyd, the son of the Quaker banker and scholar of Birmingham, the pupil of Coleridge, and author of metaphysical poems which one could not, says Lamb, read standing on one leg; Mrs. Opie, who was as much a celebrity in Norfolk as B.B. in Suffolk; the Howitts, William and Mary, those diligent makers of readable books; Bayard Taylor, the American poet and traveller; Mrs. Hemans; and Letitia E. Landon—the beautiful L. E. L.—one of whose letters, in response to a present of a volume of poetry, gave B.B. a full account of a ball that she had just attended, particularising all the dresses! Another equally inappropriate communication came from James Hogg, the Ettrick shepherd, asking the Quaker poet's assistance in inducing a London theatrical manager to accept and present a tragedy "that will astonish the world ten times more than the 'Queen's Wake' has done"—B.B.'s praise of which poem had prepared the way for this bewildering request—a tragedy with so many important characters "that justice cannot be done it in Edinburgh." Mr. Barton, who knew as little of the production of plays as of the movements of the cotillon, called in Capel Lofft, the somewhat over-enthusiastic patron of the Bloomfields, and he having on hand three unacted tragedies of his own, and an interest in others by friends, "of transcendent merit, equal to Miss Baillie's," dissuaded Hogg from his purpose. Mention of the Bloomfields, the Suffolk rustic poets, reminds us that on the

death of Robert, the author of the "Farmer's Boy," and the "Horkey," B.B. wrote some graceful memorial verses, of which this is the happiest stanza :

How wise, how noble, was thy choice,
To be the bard of simple swains ;
In all their pleasures to rejoice,
And soothe with sympathy their pains ;
To sing with feeling in thy strains
The simple pleasures they discuss,
And be, though free from classic chains,
Our own more chaste Theocritus !

And here closes the record of Bernard Barton's friends.

CHAPTER X.

THE QUAKER POET.

To be remember'd when the face
Of Nature is most fair ;
Or when some touch of heavenly grace
Uplifts the soul in prayer !

These are the richest, best reward
A poet's heart can own,
And happy is the humblest bard
Who writes for these alone.

ALTHOUGH there was a time when Bernard Barton was literally a Household Poet, a designation of which he was justly proud, his poetry is to-day unknown. Between the years of 1820 and 1840, he had a multitudinous audience, composed of those readers who prefer that the teaching of poetry shall be explicit rather than implicit. We have seen how eager was B. B. to write : hardly less eager was his public to read. His books were bought almost as rapidly as they were published, and as his poetic output was large his influence was extensively felt.

Bernard Barton's volumes appeared in the following order : *Metrical Effusions*, 1812 ; *Poems by an Amateur*, 1818 ; *Poems*, 1820 ; *Napoleon, and other Poems* (dedicated to George IV.), 1822 ; *Poetic Vigils*, 1824 ; *Minor Poems*, 1824 ; *Devotional Verses*, 1826 ; *A Widow's Tale*, 1827 ; *A New Year's Eve*, 1828 ; *The Reliquary* (by Bernard and Lucy Barton), 1836 ; and *Household Verses* (dedicated to the Queen), 1845. Besides these there were very many annuals, pocket-books, and other publications to which he contributed verses, and a great number of privately-circulated occasional poems, while he left countless manuscripts that never have reached print at all.

In the preface to *Napoleon and Other Poems*, published in 1822, when the poet was in his thirty-ninth year, B.B. writes thus frankly of his shortcomings as an artist :

It has not been from indolence that the author has not bestowed more elaborate revision on his compositions ; nor is it with any affected contempt of refined taste, or in wilful disrespect of critical opinion, that he ventures on publishing what he does ; but, in his judgment, his poetry is not of a description which long and laborious revision would essentially improve : what it might gain in elegance appears to him too contingent to be plausibly hoped ; what it might lose in simplicity and unstudied earnestness, too probable not to be rationally feared. The *matter* he has been desirous of communicating to his readers, has been, in his hours of composition, of much more moment to him than the *manner*, provided the last were not positively repulsive. Should *this* prove so to those whose taste may have been formed on purer and more classical models, he certainly must regret the circumstance ; for he pretends not to

undervalue what he is unable to attain : but he has endeavoured to do the best which his education, circumstances, and situation have allowed him.

The above statement puts fault-finding out of court. It is an old device of critics to find fault with a dove because it is not an eagle ; but when the dove comes with the frank confession, "I am only a dove : just the plain grey bird of the woodside copse—nothing more," the ingenuity even of critics is defeated. The preface continues :

In conclusion : so far as his poetry is capable of affording some degree of instruction, of yielding blameless pleasure, and of awakening interest strictly accordant with all that is pure, lovely, and of good report, and so far only, does the author wish to find favour.

Such is B. B.'s conception of the function of poetry ;—at any rate, of his own poetry. This is no place to examine the correctness of that conception, or to revive the old controversy upon the relationship of art and morals ; for however interesting such an inquiry might be, the poet has rendered it useless by his preliminary warning. B. B.'s motto was this quotation from Wordsworth :

The moving accident is not my trade ;
To freeze the blood I have no ready arts :
'Tis my delight, alone in summer shade,
To pipe a simple song for feeling hearts.

And remembering that, it would be foolish to complain because his poetry is not "the best words in the best order," nor "the impassioned expression which is in the countenance of all

science." Rather should we remind ourselves that though his work often is fluent to a fault, though he never soars and is rarely distinguished, though he is apt to hammer out his golden thoughts too thin and spread them over too wide a surface, yet Bernard Barton has positive poetic virtues such as we oftentimes look for in vain in the work of more considerable minds. He is always limpid and always lucid; his verse *flows*, as good verse should. Again, his language is never inflated. "The longer I live," he wrote in 1847, "the more I love a simple and natural tone of expression, and the more I eschew all sorts of Babylonish dialects." And Charles Lamb said one night in Mr. Patmore's hearing, "Barton is dull enough, but not nonsensical. He writes English, too." If, in short, we consider the poems as B.B. wished them to be considered, we shall find that he eminently succeeded in the task he set himself: to make his poetry afford instruction, yield blameless pleasure, and awaken interest strictly accordant with all that is pure, lovely, and of good report. Among his many volumes we shall find no poem that is not informed by this estimable purpose. And though, as has been shown, he never rose to great heights, never said anything *finally*, there is in his works much that is happily, nobly and beautifully expressed.

Contemporary criticism was honestly appreciative of the Quaker poet. Said the *Monthly Review* for August, 1824—

To those who delight in the happy delineation of the domestic affections, and all the warmer but calmer feelings of the heart, we recommend the verses of Mr. Barton. Were we compelled to define the peculiar characteristic of his poetry, we should term it the ‘poetry of the affections.’ It is the simple and pleasing effusions of a warm and poetical heart poured out in verse eminently suited to the expression of tender feelings; lucid, correct, and harmonious.

In the *British Review*, No. 40, we find this notice, one that must have given peculiar pleasure to the author of the verses :

Modern days have furnished no happier instance of the alliance of Poetry with sound Religion. Mr. Barton, without awakening the passions, has found the means of touching the affections: the tear which he produces is chaste as the dew of Heaven; the sympathy which he stirs is such as angels may feel; the joy which he imparts is such as the father may share with his daughter—the son with his mother.

And in the *Quarterly Review* for October, 1822, in an article on Gregoire’s *Histoire des Sectes Religieuses*, Southey made mention of Bernard Barton’s poems as “equally honourable to the Society [of Friends] and to the individual,” and followed the encomium by quoting “The Pool of Bethesda” in full.

Mr. FitzGerald, a critic of the keenest perception, writes thus in the *Memoir* :

The Poems, if not written off as easily as the Letters, were probably as little elaborated as any that ever were published. Without claiming for them the highest attributes of poetry, (which the author never pretended to,) we may surely say they abound in genuine feeling and elegant fancy

expressed in easy, and often very felicitous, verse. These qualities employed in illustrating the religious and domestic affections, and the pastoral scenery with which such affections are perhaps most generally associated, have made Bernard Barton, as he desired to be, a household poet with a large class of readers—a class, who, as they may be supposed to welcome such poetry as being the articulate voice of those good feelings yearning in their own bosoms, one may hope will continue and increase in England.

While in many of these Poems it is the spirit within that redeems an imperfect form—just as it lights up the irregular features of a face into beauty—there are many which will surely abide the test of severer criticism. Such are several of the Sonnets, which, if they have not (and they do not aim at) the power and grandeur, are also free from the pedantic stiffness of so many English Sonnets. Surely that one ‘To My Daughter’¹ is very beautiful in all respects.

Some of the lighter pieces—‘To Joanna,’ ‘To a Very Young Housewife,’² &c., partake much of Cowper’s playful grace. And some on the decline of life, and the religious consolations attending it, are very touching.

Charles Lamb said the verses ‘To the Memory of Bloomfield’ were ‘sweet with Doric delicacy.’ May not one say the same of those ‘On Leiston Abbey,’ ‘Cowper’s Rural Walks,’ on ‘Some Pictures,’ and others of the shorter descriptive pieces? Indeed, utterly incongruous as at first may seem the Quaker clerk and the ancient Greek Idyllist, some of these little poems recall to me the inscriptions in the Greek Anthology—not in any particular passages, but in their general air of simplicity, leisurely elegance, and quiet unimpassioned pensiveness.

Two of the poems singled out by Mr. Fitzgerald are here given. This is “Leiston Abbey by Moonlight”—

¹ See page 186.

² See page 153.

Imposing must have been the sight
Ere desolation found thee,
When morning breaking o'er thee bright,
With new-born glory crowned thee :
When, rising from the neighbouring deep,
The eye of day survey'd thee ;
Aroused thine inmates from their sleep,
And in his beams array'd thee.
And not to Fancy's eye alone
Thine earlier glories glisten ;
Her ear recovers many a tone
To which 'tis sweet to listen.
Methinks I hear the matin song
From those proud arches pealing ;
Now in full chorus borne along,
Now into distance stealing.
But yet more beautiful by far
Thy silent ruin sleeping
In the clear midnight, with that star
Through yonder archway peeping.
More beautiful that ivy fringe
That crests thy turrets hoary,
'Touch'd by the moonbeams with a tinge
As of departed glory.
More spirit-stirring is the sound
Of night-winds softly sighing
Thy roofless walls and arches round,
And then in silence dying.

And this is the poem "On some Illustrations of Cowper's 'Rural Walks'"—

Why are these tamer landscapes fraught
With charms whose meek appeal
To sensibility and thought
The heart is glad to feel ?

Cowper, thy muse's magic skill
 Has made them sacred ground ;
 Thy gentle memory haunts them still,
 And casts a spell around.

The hoary oak, the peasant's nest,
 The rustic bridge, the grove,
 The turf thy feet have often prest,
 The temple, and alcove ;

The shrubbery, moss-house, simple urn,
 The elms, the lodge, the hall,—
 Each is thy witness in its turn,
 Thy verse the charm of all.

Thy verse, no less to nature true
 Than to religion dear,
 O'er every object sheds a hue
 That long must linger here.

Amid these scenes the hours were spent
 Of which we reap the fruit ;
 And each is now thy monument,
 Since that sweet lyre is mute.

' Here, like the nightingale's, were pour'd
 Thy solitary lays,'
 Which sought the glory of the Lord,
 ' Nor asked for human praise.'

Mr. FitzGerald continues his criticism—

Not only is the fundamental thought of many of them very beautiful—as in the poems 'To a Friend in Distress,' 'The Deserted Nest,' 'Thought in a Garden,' &c.—but there are many verses whose melody will linger in the ear, and many images that will abide in the memory. Such surely are those of men's hearts brightening up at Christmas 'like a fire new stirred,'—of the stream that leaps along

over the pebbles 'like happy hearts by holiday made light,'
—of the solitary tomb showing from afar like a lamb in the
meadow.¹

Here follow the three poems mentioned in
the foregoing passage. This is "The Deserted
Nest"—

'Twas but a wither'd, worthless heap
Of dirt, and moss, and hair ;
Why then should Thought and Fancy keep
A busy vigil there ?

Yet for some moments as I stood,
And on it looked alone,
I could but think in musing mood,
Where are its inmates gone ?—

Perhaps beneath some sunnier sky
They joyous sing and soar ;
Perhaps in sad captivity
Eternally deplore—

And then, Imagination stirr'd
Down to its hidden spring,
Far, far beyond both nest and bird,
Thought spread her airy wing.

When from our tenements of clay,
Where briefly they are shrined,
Thought, Fancy, Feeling pass away—
Where flies the deathless Mind ?

Either, from sin redeem'd, it soars
On angel wing above,
And there its gratitude outpours
In praise and joy and love ;

¹ See page 64 for 'The Solitary Tomb.'

Or, exiled from the eternal source
 Whence such alone can flow,
 It breathes in accents of remorse
 Unutterable woe.

These are the lines "To a Friend in
 Distress"—

The waters of Bethesda's pool
 Were to the outward eye as clear,
 And to the outward touch as cool,
 Before the visitant drew near.

But, while untroubled, they possess'd
 No healing virtue :—gentle friend,
 Is there no fount within the breast
 To which an angel may descend?

O, while the soul unruffled lies
 Its mirror only can display,
 However beautiful their dyes,
 The forms of things that pass away.

But when its troubled waters own
 A Saviour's presence—in the wave
 The healing power of Grace is known,
 And found omnipotent to save.

A glimpse of glories far more bright
 Than earth can give is mirror'd there ;
 And perfect purity and light
 The presence of its God declare.

And this is the thought "On a Garden"—

Enough of Nature's wealth is there
 Lost Eden to recall :
 Enough of human toil and care
 To tell man's hapless fall.

And Fancy, being once awake,
Recalls one memory more,
Of Him who suffer'd for our sake,
Lost Eden to restore.

To these is added "The Spiritual Law," which "particularly pleased" Charles Lamb. "It reminded me," he says, "of Quarles and holy Mr. Herbert, as Izaak Walton calls him—the two best, if not only, of our devotional poets; though" (he adds wickedly) "some prefer Watts, and some Tom Moore"—

Say not the Law Divine
Is hidden from thee, or afar removed :
That Law within would shine,
If there its glorious light were sought and loved.

Soar not on high,
Nor ask who thence shall bring it down to earth ;
That vaulted sky
Hath no such star, didst thou but know its worth.

Nor launch thy bark
In search thereof upon a shoreless sea,
Which has no ark,
No dove to bring this olive-branch to thee.

Then do not roam
In search of that which wandering cannot win :
At home, at home
That word is placed, thy mouth, thy heart within.

O, seek it there,
Turn to its teachings with devoted will ;
Watch unto prayer,
And in the power of faith this love fulfil.

Other selections follow, chosen for their beauty of form or phrase or thought. Here,

for instance, is a stanza on children such as only a true poet could have written—

There is a holy, blest companionship
 In the sweet intercourse thus held with those
 Whose tear and smile are guileless ; from whose lip
 The simple dictate of the heart yet flows ;—
 Though even in the yet unfolded rose
 The worm may lurk, and sin blight blooming youth,
 The light born with us long so brightly glows,
 That childhood's first deceits seem almost truth,
 To life's cold after-lie, selfish, and void of ruth.

And here, from “A Grandsire's Tale,” is a stanza of exquisite beauty, which drew warmest praise from Lamb—

Though some might deem her pensive, if not sad,
 Yet those who knew her better, best could tell
 How calmly happy and how meekly glad
 Her quiet heart in its own depths did dwell,
 Like to the waters of some crystal well,
 In which the stars of heaven at noon are seen ;
 Fancy might deem on her young spirit fell
 Glimpses of light more glorious and serene
 Than that of life's brief day, so heavenly was her mien.

In many cases B.B.'s poems would gain rather than lose by rigorous curtailment ; but now and then we find a lyric of perfect proportions. What could be simpler or more satisfying than “A Stream” ?—

It flows through flowery meads,
 Gladdening the herds that on its margin browse ;
 In quiet bounty feeds
 The alders that o'ershade it with their boughs.

Gently it murmurs by
The village churchyard, with a plaintive tone
Of dirge-like melody,
For worth and beauty modest as its own.

More gaily now it sweeps
By the small school-house, in the sunshine bright,
And o'er the pebbles leaps,
Like happy hearts by holiday made light.

Had Bernard Barton been painter instead
of poet he would have given us landscapes
in the style of Gainsborough, and domestic
scenes like those of George Morland. Some
of his descriptive passages are singularly happy.
Here are two stanzas from "Napoleon"—

O come and stand with me upon this ridge,
That overlooks the sweet secluded vale ;
Before us is a little rustic bridge,
A simple plank ; and by its side a rail,
On either hand to guide the footsteps frail
Of first and second childhood ; while below,
The murmuring brooklet tells its babbling tale,
Like a sweet under song, which in its flow
It chanteth to the flowers that on its margin grow.

For many a flower does blossom there to bless
With beauty, and with fragrance to imbue
The borders—strawberry of the wilderness,
The starlike daisy, violet deeply blue,
And cowslip, in whose cup the pearly dew
Glistens unspent till noontide's languid hour ;
And, last of all, and fairest to the view,
The lily of the vale, whose virgin flower
Trembles at every breeze within its leafy bower.

The following moonlight scene (from "Re-

collections") has something of the soft beauty of night lingering in the verse—

All round was calm and still ; the noon of night
 Was fast approaching : up the unclouded sky
 The lovely moon pursued her path of light,
 And shed her silvery splendour far and nigh :
 No sound save of the night-wind's gentlest sigh
 Fell on the ear ; and that so softly blew
 It scarcely stirr'd in passing lightly by
 The acacia's airy foliage ; faintly too
 It kiss'd the jasmine stars that at my window grew.

That Bernard Barton was able to catch the very spirit of a scene, these stanzas on "Great Bealings Churchyard," written on a summer evening, are further proof—

It is not only while we look upon
 A lovely landscape, that its beauties please ;
 In distant days, when we afar are gone
 From such, in fancy's idle reveries,
 Or moods of mind which memory loves to seize,
 It comes in living beauty, fresh as when
 We first beheld it : valley, hill, or trees
 O'ershading unseen brooks ; or outstretch'd fen,
 With cattle sprinkled o'er, exist, and charm again.

Such pictures silently and sweetly glide
 Before my 'mind's eye' ; and I welcome them
 The more, because their presence has supplied
 A joy, as pure and stainless, as the gem
 That morning finds on blossom, leaf, or stem
 Of the fair garden's queen, the lovely Rose,
 Ere breeze, or sunbeam, from her diadem,
 Have stol'n one brilliant, and around she throws
 Her perfumes o'er the spot that with her beauty glows.

Bear witness many a loved and lovely scene.
Which I no more may visit ; are ye not
Thus still my own ? Thy groves of shady green,
Sweet Gosfield ! or thou, wild, romantic spot !
Where, by grey craggy cliff, and lonely grot,
The shallow Dove rolls o'er his rocky bed :
Ye still remain as fresh, and unforget,
As if but yesterday mine eyes had fed
Upon your charms ; and yet months, years, since then have sped
Their silent course. And thus it ought to be,
Should I sojourn far hence in distant years,
Thou lovely dwelling of the dead ! with thee :
For there is much about thee that endears
Thy peaceful landscape ; much the heart reveres,
Much that it loves, and all it could desire
In Meditation's haunt, when hopes and fears
Have been too busy, and we would retire
E'en from ourselves awhile, yet of ourselves inquire.
Then art thou such a spot a man might choose
For still communion : all around is sweet,
And calm, and soothing ; when the light breeze woos
The lofty limes that shadow thy retreat,
Whose interlacing branches, as they meet,
O'ertop, and almost hide the edifice
They beautify ; no sound, except the bleat
Of innocent lambs, or notes which speak the bliss
Of happy birds unseen. What could a hermit miss
'Light thickens' ; and the moon advances ; slow
Through fleecy clouds with majesty she wheels :
Yon tower's indented outline, tombstones low
And mossy grey, her silver light reveals :
Now quivering through the lime-tree foliage steals ;
And now each humble, narrow, nameless bed,
Whose grassy hillock not in vain appeals
To eyes that pass by epitaphs unread,
Rise to the view. How still the dwelling of the dead !

Directly he took pen in hand Bernard Barton seems to have assumed a gravity foreign to his natural manner : a change due to his belief in the seriousness of poetry. Hence among his work there are few exercises in light verse, and they are not conspicuously good. But he had an easy knack of touching grave matters not too seriously, as in these lines on "Old Age" :

Old age ! thou art a bitter pill
For humankind to swallow ;
Fraught with full many a present ill,
And fear of worse to follow.

And yet thou art a medicine good,
Not to be bought for money ;
Worse than the worst of nauseous food,
Yet sweeter far than honey.

Thy aches and cramps, thy weary groans,
Infirmities which breed them,
Might move the very hearts of stones,
If stones had hearts to heed them.

But these must come, of course, with thee,
And none dispute, or doubt them ;
Such may be borne, and wisest he
Who pothers least about them.

Old age ! be what thou wilt, thy reign
Cannot endure for ever ;
Feebleness, weariness, and pain
Are links that soon must sever !

And if thy pains the soul recall
To heavenly truth and warning,
Who would regret the ruin'd wall
That lets in such a morning ?

At frankly comic verse he did not shine ;
witness this rhymed address :

JOHN MAJOR, BOOKSELLER AND PRINTER,
Who lives in summer as in winter,
In short, the whole year round complete,
At *Number 50 in Fleet Street*,
In London's famed and crowded city :
If not found there, the more's the pity.

The above doggerel is only given as an excuse to introduce the reply, which in addition to being of better workmanship is another testimony to the respect in which Mr. Barton was held—and a testimony from a publisher is said to be no small thing :

TO BERNARD BARTON, far-famed writer,
Poetical and prose inditer,
Who makes a noise where'er be true folk,
Yet finds repose at *Woodbridge, Suffolk* ;
If not just now about those parts,
Inquire in all good people's hearts.

The facility shown by minor poets in the composition of the sonnet has been remarked upon again and again. Bernard Barton was no exception. He seems to have enjoyed as keenly as anyone the labour of enclosing a sentiment within fourteen ten-syllabled lines, and although he produced no transcendent example, many of his sonnets are exceedingly good. Four of the best now follow. The first is addressed "To a Grandmother" :

Old age is dark and unlovely.
Ossian.

O say not so ! A bright old age is thine ;
Calm as the gentle light of summer eves,

Ere twilight dim her dusky mantle weaves ;
 Because to thee is given, in thy decline,
 A heart that does not thanklessly repine
 At aught of which the hand of God bereaves,
 Yet all He sends with gratitude receives ;—
 May such a quiet, thankful close be mine !
 And hence thy fireside chair appears to me
 A peaceful throne—which thou wert form'd to fill ;
 Thy children, ministers who do thy will ;
 And those grandchildren, sporting round thy knee,
 Thy little subjects, looking up to thee
 As one who claims their fond allegiance still.

“ To My Daughter,” is the title of the second—

Sweet pledge of joys departed ! as I lay
 Wrapt in deep slumber, I beheld thee led
 By thy angelic mother, long since dead—
 Methought upon her face such smiles did play
 As gild the summer morning. A bright ray
 Of lambent glory streamed around her head.
 I gazed in rapture ; love had banished dread,
 Even as light the darkness drives away.
 Silent awhile ye stood—I could not move,
 Such sweet delight my senses did o’erpower ;
 When in mild accents of celestial love,
 Thy guardian spoke—‘ Cherish this opening flower
 With holy love, that so the future hour
 Shall re-unite our souls in bliss above.’

The two remaining sonnets were placed by B. B. as prefaces to collections of his verse :

Not in the shades of Academic bowers,
 Nor yet in classic haunts, where every breeze
 Wakes with its whispers music among trees,
 And breathes the fragrance of the unnumber’d flowers,

Has it been mine to nurse my minstrel powers.
Nor have I, lull'd in literary ease,
Dreamt of ascending, even by slow degrees,
'The glittering steep where Fame's proud temple towers.
Yet have I been at times a listener
To them whose hallow'd harps are now suspended
In silence ! and have ventured to prefer
A prayer in which both hope and fear were blended,
That I might rank their fellow-worshipper
In the esteem of some, when life is ended.

'The springs of life are failing one by one,
And Age with quicken'd step is drawing nigh ;
Yet would I heave no discontented sigh,
Since cause for cold ingratitude is none.
If slower through my veins life's tide may run,
The heart's young fountains are not wholly dry ;
Though evening clouds shadow my noontide sky,
Night cannot quench the spirit's inward sun !
Once more, then, ere the eternal bourn be passed,
Would I my lyre's rude melody essay ;
And, while amid the chords my fingers stray,
Should Fancy sigh—'These strains may be its last !'
Yet shall not this my mind with gloom o'ercast,
If my day's work be finished with the day !

Bernard Barton's " day's work " meant more than might at first sight be supposed. Not only did he in his lifetime communicate pleasure and comfort to many thousands of readers ; but by the publicity he gave to his poems he became the pioneer of that Quaker culture which for breadth and grace now holds its own with the best. It needed no reformer to stimulate Quakers to the composition of good prose ; for that they have always been

able to write. But Bernard Barton was the first Friend to come into prominence as a maker of literary luxuries. It is not too much to assert that had he not done so, the Society would still be more or less ignorant of much that is beautiful and ennobling in Literature and Art.

Probably Bernard Barton would be the last man to claim the title of revolutionist ; nor do we wish to over-estimate his services in the promotion of a reform which unobtrusively was drawing nearer hour by hour. Like all revolutionists, George Fox had to strike an exaggerated blow ; since excess is imperative where new causes are to be established. It is surely not unreasonable to suppose that the Founder of Quakerism was aware that the Quaker mind, being concerned chiefly with simplicity—and therefore with the first principle of beauty—must inevitably be attracted sooner or later by Art of every kind. What we have to remember is, that the recognized union of Quakerism and Art was hastened by the efforts of the gentle bard of Woodbridge.

CHAPTER XI.

THE END.

I feel that I am growing old,
 Nor wish to hide that truth,
 Conscious my heart is not more cold
 Than in my by-gone youth.

I cannot roam the country round
 As I was wont to do ;
 My feet a scantier circle bound,
 My eyes a dimmer view.

But on my mental vision rise
 Bright scenes of beauty still,—
 Morn's splendour, evening's glowing skies,
 Valley and grove and hill.

Nor can infirmities o'erwhelm
 The purer pleasures brought
 From the immortal spirit's realm
 Of feeling and of thought.

My heart ! let no dismay or doubt
 In thee an entrance win,
 Thou hast enjoy'd thyself without,
 Now seek the joy within !

Lines written in 1845.

MR. FITZGERALD writes of Bernard Barton's declining days in a way that leaves little to other pens. He says—

Mr. Barton had for many years been an *ailing* man, though he never was, I believe, *dangerously* ill (as it is

called) till the last year of his life. He took very little care of himself; laughed at all rules of diet, except temperance; and had for nearly forty years, as he said, 'taken almost as little exercise as a milestone, and far less fresh air.' Some years before his death he had been warned of a liability to disease in the heart, an intimation he did not regard, as he never felt pain in that region. Nor did he to that refer the increased distress he began to feel in exertion of any kind, walking fast or going upstairs, a distress which he looked upon as the disease of old age, and which he used to give vent to in half-humorous groans, that seemed to many of his friends rather expressive of his dislike to exercise, than implying any serious inconvenience from it. But probably the disease that partly arose from inactivity now became the true apology for it. During the last year of his life, too, some loss of his little fortune, and some perplexity in his affairs, not so distressing because of any present inconvenience to himself, as in the prospect of future evil to one whom he loved as himself, may have increased the disease within him, and hastened its final blow.

Toward the end of 1848 the evil symptoms increased much upon him; and shortly after Christmas it was found that the disease was far advanced. He consented to have his diet regulated; protesting humorously against the small glass of small beer allowed him in place of the temperate allowance of generous port, or ale, to which he was accustomed. He fulfilled his daily duty in the bank, only remitting (as he was peremptorily bid) his attendance there after his four o'clock dinner. And though not able to go out to his friends, he was glad to see them at his own house to the last.

In a footnote Mr. FitzGerald says that this exemption from prolonged office work ["I shall go on making figures," B.B. once wrote, "till

Death makes me a cipher"] led him to the self-designation of "a skulker." His friend continues—

And of late years when the day account of the bank had not come right by the usual hour of closing, and it seemed necessary to carry on business late into the evening, he would sometimes come up wearied to his room, saying—'Well, we've got all right but a shilling, and I've left my boys' (as he called the younger clerks) 'to puzzle that out.' But even then he would get up from *Rob Roy*, or the *Antiquary*, every now and then, and go to peep through the curtain of a window that opens upon the back of the bank, and, if he saw the great gas-lamp flaming within, announce with a half comical sympathy, that 'they were still at it'; or, when the lamp was at last extinguished, would return to his chair more happily, now that his partners were liberated.

In earlier years, by the way, in similar circumstances, when Mr. Barton was himself among the youngers, he was often heard to express the wish that his own pocket, never too full, might be allowed to furnish the deficit.

The end came early in 1849. We quote the Memoir for the last time :

On Monday, February 19, he was unable to get into the bank, having past a very unquiet night—the first night of distress, he thankfully said, that his illness had caused him. He suffered during the day; but welcomed as usual the friends who came to see him as he lay on his sofa; and wrote a few *notes*—for his correspondence must now, as he had humorously lamented, become as short-breathed as himself. In the evening, at half-past eight, as he was yet conversing cheerfully with a friend, he rose up, went to his bedroom, and suddenly rang the bell. He was

found by his daughter—dying. Assistance was sent for ; but all assistance was vain. ‘In a few minutes more,’ says the note despatched from the house of death that night, ‘all distress was over on *his* part—and that warm kind heart is still for ever.’

The people of Woodbridge felt the loss of their poet very deeply. Bernard Barton was so completely an integral part of the town, had so long “radiated good humour” therein, that it seemed impossible to realise that no longer would he be seen standing in the bank doorway signalling greetings to his passing acquaintances, nor walking on Sunday mornings to the little meeting-house. It is hard to reconcile ourselves to the sudden total effacement of a helpful, radiant nature.

The Quaker Poet was laid to rest in the burial-ground adjoining the Woodbridge meeting-house, beneath the acacia which he had planted to mark the grave of his wife’s mother. His tombstone bears the simple inscription—

BERNARD BARTON

Died

19 of 2 mo. 1849,

Aged 65.

The following verses, from the pen, it is believed, of Mr. FitzGerald, were printed in a Suffolk paper. They come as a fitting conclusion to this book.—

Lay him gently in the ground,
The good, the genial, and the wise ;
While Spring blows forward in the skies
To breathe new verdure o’er the mound
Where the kindly Poet lies.

Gently lay him in his place,
While the still Brethren round him stand ;

The soul indeed is far away,
But we would reverence the clay
In which so long she made a stay,—
Beaming through the friendly face,
And holding forth the honest hand.

Thou, that didst so often twine
For other urns the funeral song,
One who has known and lov'd thee long,
Would ere he mingle with the throng,
Just hang this little wreath on thine.
' Farewell, thou spirit kind and true ;
Old Friend, for evermore Adieu !'

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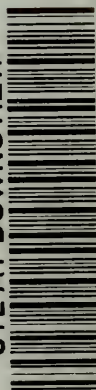
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